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ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide is intended to introduce fifth and sixth grade children to narrative prose and verse. The guide includes analyses of, suggested activities for, and questions about Rudyard Kipling's "The Cat That Walked by Himself," Jack London's "The Story of Keesh," Ernest Thompson Seton's "The Springfield Fox" (adapted by Ardis E. Burton), MacKinlay Kantor's "A Man Who Had No Eyes," Pearl Buck's "The Old Demon," Will F. Jenkins' "Night Drive," William Saroyan's "Locomotive 38, the Ojibway," Robert W. Service's "The Cremation of Sam McGee," Alfred Noyes' "The Highwayman," Ernest Thayer's "Casey at the Bat." and Bobbie Gentry's "Ode to Billie Joe." (Not all of the stories and poems discussed are included in the guide due to copyright restrictions.) (See related documents CS 200 500-CS 200 507.) (DI)

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Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: THE CAT THAT WALKED BY HIMSELF by Rudyard Kipling

Purpose: To observe the conscious use of elements of traditional narratives; to explore further the significance of narrative structures.

Analysis: It is probable that some of your students have already met Kipling's Just-So Stories, and thus should feel at ease in a re-run of an old favorite. If "The Cat That Walked By Himself" is new to most of them, however, you may wish to read the story aloud, as they follow along with their texts. It is long, and some of the vocabulary is difficult; further, it lends itself particularly well to reading aloud.

Discussion of the story can follow several paths. If your class has had any experience with folk-tales, mythology, and fables, the most profitable path for our purposes would be a discussion of Kipling's conscious adoption of some of the characteristics of these traditional forms. For in this and the other Just-So Stories he is in a sense creating a mythology, using techniques of the fable, and adapting familiar narrative patterns from the folk-tale.

One way of looking at mythology is to regard it as man's attempt to put into narrative form, in terms that he can understand, an explanation of the world as he finds it. So we have myths of the creation, myths explaining seasonal change, myths explaining thunder and lightning, myths explaining the existence of trouble in the world, and so on. In the Just-So Stories Kipling with a light touch has explained a variety of natural phenomona: how the leopard got his spots, how the elephant got his trunk, how writing was developed (a very interesting couple of stories which you could well adapt to your language curriculum), how the tides are made. In this myth he explains the domestication of the animals, and deals with the unique position of the cat, which of all the domesticated animals is neither serviceable, nor loyal, nor edible. A few minutes spent in discussing cats and their behavior, and their singular place among the domesticated animals, would be a good way of getting started in a treatment of this story.

Kipling's myth uses the basic convention of the fable, which is the assigning of human characteristics to animals. In this story the animals all talk, and are governed by human motivations. In most fables, which are short, the animal is characterized only to the extent of illustrating the human attitude the fable is dealing with. But here, in a story much longer than a fable, Kipling has had a chance to create more complex characterization in his two main actors--the cat and the Woman. The other figures in the story are barely sketched in, but the cat and, to a lesser extent, the Woman, are fully developed for they are the main opponents. It is the character of the cat, curious, silent, sly, obstinately independent, that provides the motivation for the incidents of the story. The Woman provides the needed opposition. See if your class cannot

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begin to connect character and action as two faces of the same coin: character determines incident, and incident illustrates character.

Mention of incident brings us to the story line, and here we can see Kipling drawing on the folk tale conventions of the challenge, the rash promise, the successful overcoming of obstacles, and the victory for the main character. Kipling throws in an additional snapper, to which we shall return in a moment.

The first part of the story proceeds through a series of repetitions. With the help of magic (the Woman has much of the magic witch about her), the three animals are tamed. Have your students note the repetition of incident and phrase, so common in the folk tale. The Cat, through flattery, extracts from the woman three rash promises, and the basic conflict of the story is established--clever cat versus clever woman. In the next section the Cat overcomes the three obstacles, each incident economically providing the setting for the incident to follow. The Woman spins because she is angry; the spindle provides the machinery for the next action; the making of the magic provides the stillness in which the mouse appears; and this in turn is the machinery for the overcoming of the final test (even the most magic Woman is afraid of mice, apparently).

And so the first part of the tale comes to a traditional close, with the hero the victor in the contest, and the Cat's right to shelter, warmth, and food established. You might want to point out to your class that up to this time the Cat is under no obligation to perform any further services; his bargain with the woman is completed.

And then comes the snapper we mentioned above. For Kipling, while using the conventions of the folktale, has also to deal with further observed phenomena about people, dogs, and cats. So we have the "epilogue," as we might call it, in which the Man and the Dog impose their penance on the Cat. This takes us back to myth again, for Kipling is explaining why it is that many males dislike cats, and that nearly all dogs will instinctively chase one. Ask your class again to consider the question of incident-character. Here the insistence of the Cat on walking by himself where all places are alike--in other words, his fundamental characteristic, stubborn independence--is the characteristic which motivates the action of the epilogue. And in turn, it is this epilogue which explains in terms of the mythic structure of the story some of the observable phenomena of the relation between cats, dogs, and people.

To summarize: This is light-hearted myth-making, supported by the conventions of the beast fable, and cast in terms of the folk-tale, with heightened characterization and an epilogue which modifies the standard narrative pattern of problem-test-success. Why do we enjoy this story? Because it is delightful, well-conceived, and gracefully written. But also because it is drawing on our response to narrative modes and methods which are as fundamental (apparently) as the human consciousness. The more you can get your class to see of this, WITHOUT PRESSING, the more they should enjoy this and possibly other tales from the Just-So Stories.

Some Readiness Suggestions:

1. Review and discuss the conventions of myth, fable, folktale. Refer to Pogo, Snoopy, and other contemporary manifestations of the fable. Review the folk-tale conventions of the evil witch, the rash promise, the challenge.

2. Discuss the domestication of animals. Why is the cat domestic? What does it contribute? (Ignore goldfish and canaries: they are captive, not domesticated.)

3. What is the function of myth? How does it help explain the world to us? Is it true?

4. If your class is unfamiliar with Kipling's Just-So Stories, get a copy from the library and read them a couple. Then return to the questions above. With careful preparation, your class can begin to abstract patterns from the immediate narrative, and this is your goal.

Suggested Questions:

1. When does this story take place?

2. Why did the Dog, the Horse, and the Cow wish to be tamed? What was involved in the way of trade? In other words, who got what for what?

3. Did the Cat make the same bargain? What did the Cat always insist on? Why do you think he did this? Whom do you admire most, the Cat or the other animals?

4. The Cat's insistence on his independence earned him a lot of lumps and trouble. Do you think it was worth it?

5. In what ways is this story similar to the myths you have read? To fables? To folk-tales? Why do you think Kipling uses these conventions?

6. Where is the basic conflict in this story? Who is opposed to whom? Who wins? Does the winner win completely? How does the last part of the story fit in?

7. What is the character of the Cat? Did you like him?

8. In what ways does the character of the Cat determine the way the story develops? Is there any connection that you can see between the character of the Cat and the character of the Woman and the way the story comes out?

Suggested Activities:

1. Kipling suggests a complete scene, with the wild woods, the cave, and the animals. Draw a poster illustrating the setting of this story.

2. What is a myth? A fable? A folk-tale? Discuss with the rest of the class the ways in which this story uses elements from these various forms of story, and then write a short paper in which you show how Kipling uses these forms.

3. Pretend you are the Woman, and write a short version of this story from her point of view.

4. What does Kipling think of cats? Do you agree? Write a statement of your ideas from the point of view of a cat.

THE CAT THAT WALKED BY HIMSELF

Rudyard Kipling

HEAR and attend and listen; for this befell and behappened and became and was, O my Best Beloved, when the Tame animals were wild. The Dog was wild, and the Horse was wild, and the Cow was wild, and the Sheep was wild, and the Pig was wild--as wild as wild could be--and they walked in the Wet Wild Woods by their wild lones. But the wildest of all the wild animals was the Cat. He walked by himself, and all places were alike to him.

Of course the Man was wild too. He was dreadfully wild. He didn't even begin to be tame till he met the Woman, and she told him that she did not like living in his wild ways. She picked out a nice dry Cave, instead of a heap of wet leaves, to lie down in; and she strewed clean sand on the floor; and she lit a nice fire of wood at the back of the Cave; and she hung a dried wild-horse skin, tail-down across the opening of the Cave; and she said, 'Wipe your feet, dear, when you come in, and now we'll keep house.'

That night, Best Beloved, they ate wild sheep roasted on the hot stones, and flavoured with wild garlic and wild pepper; and wild duck stuffed with wild rice and wild fenugreek and wild coriander; and marrow-bones of wild oxen; and wild cherries, and wild grenadillas. Then the Man went to sleep in front of the fire ever so happy; but the Woman sat up, combing her hair. She took the bone of the shoulder of mutton--the big fat blade-bone--and she looked at the wonderful marks on it, and she threw more wood on the fire, and she made a Magic. She made the First Singing Magic in the world.

Out in the Wet Wild Woods all the wild animals gathered together where they could see the light of the fire a long way off, and they wondered what it meant.

Then Wild Horse stamped with his wild foot and said, 'O my Friends and O my Enemies, why have the Man and the Woman made that great light in that great Cave, and what harm will it do us?'

Wild Dog lifted up his wild nose and smelled the smell of roast mutton, and said, 'I will go up and see and look, and say; for I think it is good. Cat, come with me.'

'Nenni!' said the Cat. 'I am the Cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me. I will not come.'

'Then we can never be friends again,' said Wild Dog, and he trotted off to the Cave. But when he had gone a little way the Cat said to himself, 'All places are alike to me. Why should I not go too and see and look and come away at my own liking.' So he slipped after Wild Dog softly, very softly, and hid himself where he could hear everything.

When Wild Dog reached the mouth of the Cave he lifted up the dried horse-skin with his nose and sniffed the beautiful smell of the roast mutton, and the Woman, looking at the blade-bone, heard him, and laughed, and said, 'Here comes the first Wild Thing out of the Wild Woods, what do you want?'

Wild Dog said, 'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy, what is this that smells so good in the Wild Woods?'

Then the Woman picked up a roasted mutton-bone and threw it to Wild Dog, and said, 'Wild Thing out of the Wild Woods, taste and try.' Wild Dog gnawed the bone, and it was more delicious than anything he had ever tasted, and he said, 'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy, give me another.'

The Woman said, 'Wild Thing out of the Wild Woods, help my Man to hunt through the day and guard this Cave at night, and I will give you as many roast bones as you need.'

'Ah!' said the Cat, listening. 'This is a very wise Woman, but she is not so wise as I am.'

Wild Dog crawled into the Cave and laid his head on the Woman's lap, and said, 'O my Friend and Wife of my Friend, I will help your Man to hunt through the day, and at night I will guard your Cave.'

'Ah!' said the Cat, listening. 'That is a very foolish Dog.' And he went back through the Wet Wild Woods waving his wild tail, and walking by his wild lone. But he never told anybody.

When the Man waked up he said, 'What is Wild Dog doing here?' And the Woman said, 'His name is not wild Dog any more, but the First Friend, because he will be our friend for always and always and always. Take him with you when you go hunting.'

Next night the Woman cut great green armfuls of fresh grass from the water-meadows, and dried it before the fire, so that it smelt like new-mown hay, and she sat at the mouth of the Cave and plaited a halter out of horse-hide, and she looked at the shoulder of mutton-bone--at the big broad blade-bone--and she made a Magic. She made the Second Singing Magic in the world.

Out in the Wild Woods all the wild animals wondered what had happened to Wild Dog, and at last Wild Horse stamped with his foot and said, 'I will go and see and say why Wild Dog has not returned. Cat, come with me.'

'Nenni!' said the Cat. 'I am the Cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me. I will not come.' But all the same he followed Wild Horse softly, very softly, and hid himself where he could hear everything.

When the Woman heard Wild Horse tripping and stumbling on his long mane, she laughed and said, 'Here comes the second. Wild Thing out of the Wild Woods what do you want?'

Wild Horse said, 'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy, where is Wild Dog?'

The Woman laughed, and picked up the blade-bone and looked at it, and said, 'Wild Thing out of the Wild Woods, you did not come here for Wild Dog, but for the sake of this good grass.'

And Wild Horse, tripping and stumbling on his long mane, said, 'That is true; give it me to eat.'

The Woman said, 'Wild Thing out of the Wild Woods, bend your wild head and wear what I give you, and you shall eat the wonderful grass three times a day.'

'Ah,' said the Cat, listening, 'this is a clever Woman, but she is not so clever as I am.'

Wild Horse bent his wild head, and the Woman slipped the plaited hide halter over it, and Wild Horse breathed on the Woman's feet and said, 'O my Mistress, and Wife of my Master, I will be your servant for the sake of the wonderful grass.'

'Ah,' said the Cat, listening, 'that is a very foolish Horse.' And he went back through the Wet Wild Woods, waving his wild tail and walking by his wild lone. But he never told anybody.

When the Man and the Dog came back from hunting, the Man said, "What is Wild Horse doing here?' And the Woman said, 'His name is not Wild Horse any more, but the First Servant, because he will carry us from place to place for always and always and always. Ride on his back when you go hunting.'

Next day, holding her wild head high that her wild horns should not catch in the wild trees, Wild Cow came up to the Cave, and the Cat followed, and hid himself just the same as before; and everything happened just the same as before; and the Cat said the same things as before, and when Wild Cow had promised to give her milk to the Woman every day in exchange for the wonderful grass, the Cat went back through the Wet Wild Woods waving his wild tail and walking by his wild lone, just the same as before. But he never told anybody. And when the Man and the Horse and the Dog came home from hunting and asked the same questions same as before, the Woman said, 'Her name is not Wild Cow any more, but the Giver of Good Food. She will give us the warm white milk for always and always and always, and I will take care of her while you and the First Friend and the First Servant go hunting.'

Next day the Cat waited to see if any other Wild thing would go up to the Cave, but no one moved in the Wet Wild Woods, so the Cat walked there by himself; and he saw the Woman milking the Cow, and he

saw the light of the fire in the Cave, and he smelt the smell of the warm white milk.

Cat said, 'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy, where did Wild Cow go?'

The Woman laughed and said, 'Wild Thing out of the Wild Woods, go back to the Woods again, for I have braided up my hair, and I have put away the magic blade-bone, and we have no more need of either friends or servants in our Cave.'

Cat said, 'I am not a friend, and I am not a servant. I am the Cat who walks by himself, and I wish to come into your cave.'

Woman said, 'Then why did you not come with First Friend on the first night?'

Cat grew angry and said, 'Has Wild Dog told tales of me?'

Then the Woman laughed and said, 'You are the Cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to you. You are neither a friend nor a servant. You have said it yourself. Go away and walk by yourself in all places alike.'

Then Cat pretended to be sorry and said, 'Must I never come into the Cave? Must I never sit by the warm fire? Must I never drink the warm milk? You are very wise and very beautiful. You should not be cruel even to a Cat.'

Woman said, 'I know I was wise, but I did not know I was beautiful. So I will make a bargain with you. If ever I say one word in your praise you may come into the Cave.'

'And if you say two words in my praise?' said the Cat.

'I never shall,' said the Woman, 'but if I say two words in your praise, you may sit by the fire in the Cave.'

'And if you say three words?' said the Cat.

'I never shall,' said the Woman, 'but if I say three words in your praise, you may drink the warm white milk three times a day for always and always and always.'

Then the Cat arched his back and said, 'Now let the Curtain at the mouth of the Cave, and the Fire at the back of the Cave, and the Milk-pots that stand beside the Fire, remember what my Enemy and the Wife of my Enemy has said.' And he went away through the Wet Wild Woods waving his wild tail and walking by his wild lone.

That night when the Man and the Horse and the Dog came home from hunting, the Woman did not tell them of the bargain that she had

made with the Cat, because she was afraid that they might not like it.

Cat went far and far away and hid himself in the Wet Wild Woods by his wild lone for a long time till the Woman forgot all about him. Only the Bat--the little upside-down Bat--that hung inside the Cave, knew where Cat hid; and every evening Bat would fly to Cat with news of what was happening.

One evening Bat said, 'There is a Baby in the Cave. He is new and pink and fat and small, and the Woman is very fond of him.'

'Ah,' said the Cat, listening, 'but what is the Baby fond of?'

'He is fond of things that are soft and tickle,' said the Bat. 'He is fond of warm things to hold in his arms when he goes to sleep. He is fond of being played with. He is fond of all those things.'

'Ah,' said the Cat, listening, 'then my time has come.'

Next night Cat walked through the Wet Wild Woods and hid very near the Cave till morning-time, and Man and Dog and Horse went hunting. The Woman was busy cooking that morning, and the Baby cried and interrupted. So she carried him outside the Cave and gave him a handful of pebbles to play with. But still the Baby cried.

Then the Cat put out his paddy paw and patted the Baby on the cheek, and it cooed; and the Cat rubbed against its fat knees and tickled it under its fat chin with his tail. And the Baby laughed; and the Woman heard him and smiled.

Then the Bat--the little upside-down Bat--that hung in the mouth of the Cave said, 'O my Hostess and Wife of my Host and Mother of my Host's Son, a Wild Thing from the Wild Woods is most beautifully playing with your Baby.'

'A blessing on that Wild Thing whoever he may be,' said the Woman, straightening her back, 'for I was a busy woman this morning and he has done me a service.'

That very minute and second, Best Beloved, the dried horse-skin Curtain that was stretched tail-down at the mouth of the Cave fell down--woosh!--because it remembered the bargain she had made with the Cat, and when the Woman went to pick it up--lo and behold!--the Cat was sitting quite comfy inside the Cave.

'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy and Mother of my Enemy,' said the Cat, 'it is I: for you have spoken a word in my praise, and now I can sit within the Cave for always and always and always. But still I am the Cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me.'

The Woman was very angry, and shut her lips tight and took up her spinning wheel and began to spin.

But the Baby cried because the Cat had gone away, and the Woman could not hush it, for it struggled and kicked and grew black in the face.

'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy and Mother of my Enemy,' said the Cat, 'take a strand of the wire that you are spinning and tie it to your spinning-whorl and drag it along the floor, and I will show you a magic that shall make your Baby laugh as loudly as he is now crying.'

'I will do so,' said the Woman, 'because I am at my wits' end; but I will not thank you for it.'

She tied the thread to the little clay spindle whorl and drew it across the floor, and the Cat ran after it and patted it with his paws and rolled head over heels, and tossed it backward over his shoulder and chased it between his hind-legs and pretended to lose it, and pounced down upon it again, till the Baby laughed as loudly as it had been crying, and scrambled after the Cat and frolicked all over the Cave till it grew tired and settled down to sleep with the Cat in its arms.

'Now,' said the Cat, 'I will sing the Baby a song that shall keep him asleep for an hour.' And he began to purr, loud and low, low and loud, till the Baby fell fast asleep. The Woman smiled as she looked down upon the two of them and said, 'That was wonderfully done. No question but you are very clever, O Cat.'

That very minute and second, Best Beloved, the smoke of the fire at the back of the Cave came down in clouds from the roof--puff!--because it remembered the bargain she had made with the Cat, and when it had cleared away--lo and behold!--the Cat was sitting quite comfy close to the fire.

'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy and Mother of My Enemy,' said the Cat, 'it is I, for you have spoken a second word in my praise, and now I can sit by the warm fire at the back of the Cave for always and always and always. But still I am the Cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me.'

Then the Woman was very very angry, and let down her hair and put more wood on the fire and brought out the broad blade-bone of the shoulder of mutton and began to make a Magic that should prevent her from saying a third word in praise of the Cat. It was not a Singing Magic, Best Beloved, it was a Still Magic; and by and by the Cave grew so still that a little wee-wee mouse crept out of a corner and ran across the floor.

'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy and Mother of my Enemy,' said the Cat, 'is that little mouse part of your magic?'

'Ouh! Chee! No indeed!' said the Woman, and she dropped the blade-bone and jumped upon the footstool in front of the fire and braided up her hair very quick for fear that the mouse should run up it.

'Ah,' said the Cat, watching, 'then the mouse will do me no harm if I eat it?'

'No,' said the Woman, braiding up her hair, 'eat it quickly and I will ever be grateful to you.'

Cat made one jump and caught the little mouse, and the Woman said, 'A hundred thanks. Even the First Friend is not quick enough to catch little mice as you have done. You must be very wise.'

That very moment and second, O Best Beloved, the Milk-pot that stood by the fire cracked in two pieces--ffft--because it remembered the bargain she had made with the Cat, and when the Woman jumped down from the footstool--lo and behold!--the Cat was lapping up the warm white milk that lay in one of the broken pieces.

'O my Enemy and Wife of my Enemy and Mother of my Enemy,' said the Cat, 'it is I; for you have spoken three words in my praise, and now I can drink the warm white milk three times a day for always and always and always. But still I am the Cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me.'

Then the Woman laughed and set the Cat a bowl of the warm white milk and said, 'O Cat, you are as clever as a man, but remember that your bargain was not made with the Man or the Dog, and I do not know what they will do when they come home.'

'What is that to me?' said the Cat. 'If I have my place in the Cave by the fire and my warm white milk three times a day I do not care what the Man or the Dog can do.'

That evening when the Man and the Dog came into the Cave, the Woman told them all the story of the bargain while the Cat sat by the fire and smiled. Then the Man said, 'Yes, but he has not made a bargain with me or with all proper Men after me.' Then he took off his two leather boots and he took up his little stone axe (that makes three) and he fetched a piece of wood and a hatchet (that is five altogether), and he set them out in a row and he said, 'Now we will make our bargain. If you do not catch mice when you are in the Cave for always and always and always, I will throw these five things at you whenever I see you, and so shall all proper Men do after me.'

'Ah,' said the Woman, listening, 'this is a very clever Cat, but he is not so clever as my Man.'

The Cat counted the five things (and they looked very knobby) and he said, 'I will catch mice when I am in the Cave for always and always and always; but still I am the Cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me.'

'Not when I am near,' said the Man. 'If you had not said that last I would have put all these things away for always and always and always; but I am now going to throw my two boots and my little stone axe (that makes three) at you whenever I meet you. And so shall all proper Men do after me!'

Then the Dog said, 'Wait a minute. He has not made a bargain with me or with all proper Dogs after me.' And he showed his teeth and said, 'If you are not kind to the Baby while I am in the Cave for always and always and always, I will hunt you till I catch you, and when I catch you I will bite you. And so shall all proper Dogs do after me.'

'Ah,' said the Woman, listening, 'this is a very clever Cat, but he is not so clever as the Dog.'

Cat counted the Dog's teeth (and they looked very pointed) and he said, 'I will be kind to the Baby while I am in the Cave, as long as he does not pull my tail too hard, for always and always and always. But still I am the Cat that walks by himself, and all places are alike to me.'

'Not when I am near,' said the Dog. 'If you had not said that last I would have shut my mouth for always and always and always; but now I am going to hunt you up a tree whenever I meet you. And so shall all proper Dogs do after me.'

Then the Man threw his two boots and his little stone axe (that makes three) at the Cat, and the Cat ran out of the Cave and the Dog chased him up a tree; and from that day to this, Best Beloved, three proper Men out of five will always throw things at a Cat whenever they meet him, and all proper Dogs will chase him up a tree. But the Cat keeps his side of the bargain too. He will kill mice and he will be kind to Babies when he is in the house, just as long as they do not pull his tail too hard. But when he has done that, and between times, and when the moon gets up and night comes, he is the Cat that walks by himself, and all places are alike to him. Then he goes out to the Wet Wild Woods or up the Wet Wild Trees or on the Wet Wild Roofs, waving his wild tail and walking by his wild lone.

"The Cat That Walked By Himself" by Rudyard Kipling. From the Just-So Stories. Copyright 1902.

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: THE STORY OF KEESH by Jack London

Purpose: To show how character and incident operate together to produce conflict in a narrative; to examine diction and narrative pattern as devices of mood or tone.

Analysis: The rags-to-riches story of the underdog who uses his head to achieve success and sovereignty over his fellows is one of the commonest of narrative plots, and Jack London employs it to advantage in "The Story of Keesh." The so-called "success story" has always been popular because it reflectsman's universal human impulse to master both the forces of the external world and the forces inside himself. The superiority of London's story lies in its ability to present this impulse in a structure of incident that is realistic and relatively unsentimental, without the trappings of improbability that reduce so many of our success stories to mere fairy tales.

Speaking in terms of narrative structure, the story's central conflict is between man and his society (Keesh, the brash boy, versus the older and presumably wiser Eskimo tribesmen). There is also a secondary conflict between Keesh and the harsh environment in which he must achieve his success. The odds seem much against him in the beginning, and the story achieves its suspenseful quality because of the way Keesh deals simultaneously with these two powerful forces.

This is above all a story of character, and class discussion will probably most profitably focus on the personality of the young Eskimo. For obvious reasons, your students should quickly identify with Keesh--but more importantly, they should be made to see that it is precisely his character which causes the story's events to occur. Were Keesh less sensitive to his proud heritage, less self-assured, and less resourceful, there would be no conflict, and hence no story. He and his mother would remain in their neglected position in the tribe, eating the toughest meat and living in the meanest igloo. But Keesh sets out to change things, and succeeds. Character interacts with incident to create a conflict that demands resolution. The pleasure we get from the resolution comes from a sense that the fitness of things has been restored: the son of a great hunter has proved himself and taken his rightful place in his tribe.

You may wish to have the class diagram the plot structure in the conventional way:

Exposition:	paragraphs 1 and 2	Keesh's family background
Complication:	paragraphs 3 through 15	the council meeting; conflict between Keesh and his elders.
Action rising to climax:	paragraphs 16 through 63	Keesh's successful hunting suspicion of witchcraft Keesh's explanation of "headcraft"

Resolution:	paragraphs 64 through 65	Keesh assumes dominance in his tribe

But it is also useful to have the class see that the changing attitudes of the tribe toward Keesh act as a structural measure of the narrative's progress. As they go through the story a second time, have them point out places where the tribesmen express their changing attitudes toward Keesh, and the reasons that prompt the change. The class should see that just as Keesh's words and actions show his character, so do the tribesmen's actions and attitudes tell us something about their characters. Explore the development of their envy and disbelief, leading to the rumors of witchcraft. This kind of searching through the story should be conducted quite casually. Avoid the "hunt-and-peck" approach--the aim is simply to get students to see that character and incident influence and reflect each other.

Earlier we referred to London's story as more than a mere fairy tale. Yet he does deliberately use some techniques which give his story the flavor of romance or legend, of a tale to be told around an evening campfire. For instance, he emphasizes how long ago the narrated events took place. He also employs the time-honored story-teller's technique of using similar opening and closing paragraphs to summarize the story and enclose its actual details within a sort of frame.

But the most important tonal device is the special language in which London narrates the story. Those of your students who developed a heightened language awareness in the earlier poetry units may notice that the language in this story has an archaic, almost Biblical quality. The text abounds in "thee's" and "thou's" and expressions like "he had seen thirteen suns," "Keesh made answer," and "he came not shamefacedly." Throw open to the class the question of why London adopts this kind of language. Does he wish to impress us with the dignity and seriousness of the event, and thus raise our estimation of his central character? Does he wish the language to impart an exotic flavor, a sense that we are dealing here with a culture and with customs foreign to our own? At least get the class to consider why this diction is used over some other kind. (You might use the analogy of the American Indian, whose language is also usually represented by authors as quite different from our own.) It's hard to say what they will come up with, but try to get them to see that these devices are intended to work together with other narrative components to produce a particular mood or effect.

READINESS:

1. Some discussion of Eskimo culture and hunting techniques might be in order. Use maps or other geographical aids to locate the events of the story and to emphasize the coldness and harshness of the climate. Perhaps also explain the six-month darkness of the polar regions.

2. Vocabulary:

apportioned--given out

aghast--shocked

indignation--anger

presumption--bold overconfidence

unprecedented occurrence--one that has never happened before

arrogance--unusual, obvious pride

ate profoundly--i.e., ate a great deal

mayhap--perhaps, maybe

ominously--threateningly

discomfited--disturbed

corroborated--supported or agreed with

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

1. There are three basic ways of determining what kind of person a character in a story is: by what he says, by what he does, and by what others say about him.

   a. Using these three ways, describe as fully as you can the kind of person Keesh is.

   b. Would you agree that what Keesh says and does is a more reliable indication of his real character than what others say about him? Why or why not?

2. What forces are operating against Keesh in the beginning of the story? --(lack of a father, poverty, youth, the disdain of his elders, the forbidding nature of his external environment)

3. In one sentence, tell what the problem, or conflict, is in this story. --(Keesh and his mother are neglected by the other tribesmen)

4. How does Keesh overcome his difficulties? What is the meaning of "headcraft"? Would you say that Keesh has an unusual amount of headcraft for a boy his age?

5. List the most important events in this story.

6. Describe the various changes in the older hunters' attitudes toward Keesh as the story progresses.

7. What is special about the language Jack London uses to tell this story? Why do you think he chose this kind of language over some other kind?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

1. Bring to class a picture or drawing of the device Keesh used to kill the bears. Or, if the materials are available, construct one of the devices in class and pass it around for (careful!) examination.

2. Find other stories about Eskimo hunting. How do the techniques used compare with those used by Keesh?

3. In what ways does Eskimo culture bear similarities to the culture of the American Indians? (Hunting, tribal organization, attitudes toward women and children, etc.)

THE STORY OF KEESH

Jack London

Keesh lived long ago on the rim of the polar sea, was head man of his village through many and prosperous years, and died full of honors with his name on the lips of the men. So long ago did he live that only the old men remember his name, his name and the tale, which they got from the old men before them, and which the old men to come will tell to their children and their children's children down to the end of time. And the winter darkness, when the north gales make their long sweep across the ice-pack, and the air is filled with flying white, and no man may venture forth, is the chosen time for the telling of how Keesh, from the poorest igloo in the village, rose to power and place over them all.

He was a bright boy, so the tale runs, healthy and strong, and he had seen thirteen suns, in their way of reckoning time. For each winter the sun leaves the land in darkness, and the next year a new sun returns so that they may be warm again and look upon one another's faces. The father of Keesh had been a very brave man, but he had met his death in a time of famine, when he sought to save the lives of his people by taking the life of a great polar bear. In his eagerness he came to close grapples with the bear, and his bones were crushed; but the bear had much meat on him and the people were saved. Keesh was his only son, and after that Keesh lived alone with his mother. But the people are prone to forget, and they forgot the deed of his father; and he being but a boy, and his mother only a woman, they, too, were swiftly forgotten, and ere long came to live in the meanest of all the igloos.

It was at a council, one night, in the big igloo of Klosh-Kwan, the chief, that Keesh showed the blood that ran in his veins and the manhood that stiffened his back. With the dignity of an elder, he rose to his feet, and waited for silence amid the babble of voices.

"It is true that meat be apportioned me and mine," he said. "But it is ofttimes old and tough, this meat, and, moreover, it has an unusual quantity of bones."

The hunters, grizzled and gray, and lusty and young were aghast. The like had never been known before. A child, that talked like a grown man, and said harsh things to their very faces!

But steadily and with seriousness, Keesh went on. "For that I know my father, Bok, was a great hunter, I speak these words. It is said that Bok brought home more meat than any of the two best hunters, that with his own hands he attended to the division of it, that with his own eyes he saw to it that the least old woman and the least old man received fair share."

"Na! Na!" the men cried. "Put the child out!" "Send him off to bed!" "He is no man that he should talk to men and graybeards."

He waited calmly till the uproar died down.

"Thou has a wife, Ugh-Gluk," he said, "and for her dost thou speak. And thou, too, Massuk, a mother also, and for them dost thou speak. My mother has no one, save me; wherefore I speak. As I say, though Bok be dead because he hunted over-keenly, it is just that I, who am his son, and Ikeega, who is my mother and was his wife, should have meat in plenty so long as there be meat in plenty in the tribe. I, Keesh, the son of Bok, have spoken."

He sat down, his ears keenly alert to the flood of protest and indignation his words had created.

"That a boy should speak in council!" old Ugh-Gluk was mumbling.

"Shall the babes in arms tell us men the things we shall do?" Massuk demanded in a loud voice. "Am I a man that I should be made a mock by every child that cries for meat?"

The anger boiled a white heat. They ordered him to bed, threatened that he should have no meat at all, and promised him sore beatings for his presumption. Keesh's eyes began to flash, and the blood to pound darkly under his skin. In the midst of the abuse he sprang to his feet.

"Hear me, ye men!" he cried. "Never shall I speak in the council again, never again till the men come to me and say, 'It is well, Keesh, that thou shouldst speak, it is well and it is our wish.' Take this now, ye men, for my last word. Bok, my father was a great hunter. I too, his son, shall go and hunt the meat that I eat. And be it known, now, that the division of that which I kill shall be fair. And no widow nor weak one shall cry in the night because there is no meat, when the strong men are groaning in great pain for that they have eaten overmuch. And in the days to come there shall be shame upon the strong men who have eaten overmuch. I, Keesh, have said it!"

Jeers and scornful laughter followed him out of the igloo, but his jaw was set and he went his way, looking neither to right nor left.

The next day he went forth along the shoreline where the ice and the land met together. Those who saw him go noted that he carried his bow, with a goodly supply of bone-barbed arrows, and that across his shoulder was his father's big hunting-spear. And there was laughter, and much talk, at the event. It was an unprecedented occurrence. Never did boys of his tender age go forth to hunt, much less to hunt alone. Also were there shakings of heads and prophetic mutterings, and the women looked pityingly at Ikeega, and her face was grave and sad.

"He will be back ere long," they said cheeringly.

"Let him go; it will teach him a lesson," the hunters said. "And he will come back shortly, and he will be meek and soft of speech in the days to follow."

But a day passed, and a second, and on the third a wild gale blew, and there was no Keesh. Ikeega tore her hair and put soot of the seal-oil

on her face in token of her grief; and the women assailed the men with bitter words in that they had mistreated the boy and sent him to his death; and the men made no answer, preparing to go in search of the body when the storm abated.

Early next morning, however, Keesh strode into the village. But he came not shamefacedly. Across his shoulders he bore a burden of fresh-killed meat. And there was importance in his step and arrogance in his speech.

"Go, ye men, with the dogs and sledges, and take my trail for the better part of a day's travel," he said. "There is much meat on the ice--a she-bear and two half-grown cubs."

Ikeega was overcome with joy, but he received her demonstrations in manlike fashion, saying: "Come, Ikeega, let us eat. And after that I shall sleep, for I am weary."

And he passed into their igloo and ate profoundly, and after that slept for twenty running hours.

There was much doubt at first, much doubt and discussion. The killing of a polar bear is very dangerous, but thrice dangerous is it, and three times thrice, to kill a mother bear with her cubs. The men could not bring themselves to believe that the boy Keesh, single-handed, had accomplished so great a marvel. But the women spoke of the fresh-killed meat he had brought on his back, and this was an overwhelming argument against their unbelief. So they finally departed, grumbling greatly that in all probability, if the thing were so, he had neglected to cut up the carcasses. Now in the north it is very necessary that this should be done as soon as a kill is made. If not, the meat freezes so solidly as to turn the edge of the sharpest knife, and a three-hundred-pound bear, frozen stiff, is no easy thing to put upon a sled and haul over the rough ice. But arrived at the spot, they found not only the kill which they had doubted, but that Keesh had quartered the beasts in true hunter fashion, and removed the entrails.

Thus began the mystery of Keesh, a mystery that deepened and deepened with the passing of the days. His very next trip he killed a young bear, nearly full-grown, and on the trip following, a large male bear and his mate. He was ordinarily gone from three to four days, though it was nothing unusual for him to stay away a week at a time on the ice-field. Always he declined company on these expeditions, and the people marveled. "How does he do it?" they demanded of one another. "Never does he take a dog with him, and dogs are of such great help, too."

"Why dost thou hunt only bear?" Klosh-Kwan once ventured to ask.

And Keesh made fitting answer. "It is well known that there is more meat on the bear," he said.

But there was also talk of witchcraft in the village. "He hunts with evil spirits," some of the people contended, "wherefore his hunting is rewarded. How else can it be, save that he hunts with evil spirits?"

"Mayhap they be not evil, but good, these spirits," others said. "It is known that his father was a mighty hunter. May not his father hunt with him so that he may attain excellence and patience and understanding? Who knows?"

None the less, his success continued, and the less skilful hunters were often kept busy hauling in his meat. And in the division of it he was just. As his father had done before him, he saw to it that the least old woman and the least old man received a fair portion, keeping no more for himself than his needs required. And because of this, and of his merit as a hunter, he was looked upon with respect, and even awe; and there was talk of making him chief after old Klosh-Kwan. Because of the things he had done, they looked for him to appear again in the council, but he never came, and they were ashamed to ask.

"I am minded to build me an igloo," he said one day to Klosh-Kwan and a number of the hunters. "It shall be a large igloo, wherein Ikeega and I can dwell in comfort."

"Ay," they nodded gravely.

"But I have no time. My business is hunting, and it takes all my time. So it is but just that the men and women of the village who eat my meat should build me my igloo."

And the igloo was built accordingly, on a generous scale which exceeded even the dwelling of Klosh-Kwan. Keesh and his mother moved into it, and it was the first prosperity she had enjoyed since the death of Bok. Nor was material prosperity alone hers, for, because of her wonderful son and the position he had given her, she came to be looked upon as the first woman in all the village; and the women were given to visiting her, to asking her advice, and to quoting her wisdom when arguments arose among themselves or with the men.

But it was the mystery of Keesh's marvelous hunting that took chief place in all their minds. And one day Ugh-Gluk taxed him with witchcraft to his face.

"It is charged," Ugh-Gluk said ominously, "that thou dealest with evil spirits, wherefore thy hunting is rewarded."

"Is not the meat good?" Keesh made answer. "Has one in the village yet to fall sick from the eating of it? How dost thou know that witchcraft be concerned? Or dost thou guess, in the dark, merely because of the envy that consumes thee?"

And Ugh-Gluk withdrew discomfited, the women laughing at him as he walked away. But in the council one night, after long deliberation, it was determined to put spies on his track when he went forth to hunt, so that his methods be learned. So, on his next trip, Bim and Bawn, two young men, and of hunters the craftiest, followed after him, taking care not to be seen. After five days they returned, their eyes bulging and their tongues a-tremble to tell what they had seen. The council was hastily called in Klosh-

Kwan's dwelling, and Bim took up the tale.

"Brothers! As commanded, we journeyed on the trail of Keesh, and cunningly we journeyed, so that he might not know. And midway of the first day he picked up with a great he-bear. It was a very great bear."

"None greater," Bawn corroborated, and went on himself. "Yet was the bear not inclined to fight, for he turned away and made off slowly over the ice. This we saw from the rocks of the shore, and the bear came toward us, and after him came Keesh, very much unafraid. And he shouted harsh words after the bear, and waved his arms about, and made much noise. Then did the bear grow angry, and rise up on his hind legs, and growl. But Keesh walked right up to the bear."

"Ay," Bim continued the story. "Right up to the bear Keesh walked. And the bear took after him, and Keesh ran away. But as he ran he dropped a little round ball on the ice. And the bear stopped and smelled of it, and then swallowed it up. And Keesh continued to run away and drop little round balls, and the bear continued to swallow them up."

Exclamations and cries of doubt were being made, and Ugh-Gluk expressed open unbelief.

"With our own eyes we saw it," Bim affirmed.

And Bawn--"Ay, with our own eyes. And this continued until the bear stood suddenly upright and cried aloud in pain, and thrashed his fore-paws madly about. And Keesh continued to make off over the ice to a safe distance. But the bear gave him no notice, being occupied with the misfortune the little round balls had wrought within him."

"Ay, within him," Bim interrupted. "For he did claw at himself, and leap about over the ice like a playful puppy, save from the way he growled and squealed it was plain it was not play but pain. Never did I see such a sight!"

"Nay, never was such a sight seen," Bawn took up the strain. "And furthermore, it was such a large bear."

"Witchcraft," Ugh-Gluk suggested.

"I know not," Bawn replied. "I tell only what my eyes beheld. And after a while the bear grew weak and tired, for he was very heavy and he had jumped about with exceeding violence, and he went off along the shore-ice, shaking his slowly from side to side and sitting down ever and again to squeal and cry. And Keesh followed after the bear, and we followed after Keesh, and for that day and three days more we followed. The bear grew weak, and never ceased crying from his pain."

"It was a charm!" Ugh-Gluk exclaimed. "Surely it was a charm!"

"It may well be."

And Bim relieved Bawn. "The bear wandered, now this way and now that, doubling back and forth and crossing his trail in circles, so that at the end he was near where Keesh had first come upon him. By this time he was quite sick, the bear, and could crawl no farther, so Keesh came up close and speared him to death."

"And then?" Klosh-Kwan demanded.

"Then we left Keesh skinning the bear, and came running that the news of the killing might be told."

And in the afternoon of that day the women hauled in the meat of the bear while the men sat in council assembled. When Keesh arrived a messenger was sent to him, bidding him come to the council. But he sent reply, saying that he was hungry and tired; also that his igloo was large and comfortable and could hold that many men.

And curiosity was so strong on the men that the whole council, Klosh-Kwan to the fore, rose up and went to the igloo of Keesh. He was eating, but he received them with respect and seated them according to their rank. Ikeega was proud and embarrassed by turns, but Keesh was quite composed.

Klosh-Kwan recited the information brought by Bim and Bawn, and at its close said in a stern voice: "So explanation is wanted, O Keesh, of thy manner of hunting. Is there witchcraft in it?"

Keesh looked up and smiled. "Nay, O Klosh-Kwan. It is not for a boy to know aught of witches, and of witches I know nothing. I have but devised a means whereby I may kill the ice-bear with ease, that is all. It be headcraft, not witchcraft."

"And may any man?"

"Any man."

There was a long silence. The men looked in one another's faces, and Keesh went on eating.

"And. . . and. . . and wilt thou tell us, O Keesh?" Klosh-Kwan finally asked in a tremulous voice.

"Yea, I will tell thee." Keesh finished sucking a marrowbone and rose to his feet. "It is quite simple. Behold!"

He picked up a thin strip of whalebone and showed it to them. The ends were sharp as needle-points. The strip he coiled carefully, till it disappeared in his hand. Then, suddenly releasing it, it sprang straight again. He picked up a piece of blubber.

"So," he said, "one takes a small chunk of blubber, thus, and thus makes it hollow. Then into the hollow goes the whalebone, so tightly coiled, and another piece of blubber is fitted over the whalebone. After that it is

put outside where it freezes into a little round ball. The bear swallows the little round ball, the blubber melts, the whalebone with its sharp ends stands out straight, the bear gets sick, and when the bear is very sick, why, you kill him with a spear. It is quite simple."

And Ugh-Gluk said "Oh!" and Klosh-Kwan said "Ah!" And each said something after his own manner, and all understood.

And this is the story of Keesh, who lived long ago on the rim of the polar sea. Because he exercised headcraft and not witchcraft, he rose from the meanest igloo to be head man of his village, and through all the years that he lived, it is related, his tribe was prosperous, and neither widow nor weak one cried aloud in the night because there was no meat.

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "The Springfield Fox," by Ernest Thompson Seton, adapted by Ardis E. Burton

Purpose: To provide students with a story rich in action and information; to explore the narrative concepts of motivation and point of view.

Analysis: "The Springfield Fox" has the advantage of being enjoyable reading on several levels. Children love animal stories, and this one is packed with lore about one of the most elusive and clever of woods animals, the fox. In addition to a wealth of information that is fascinating for its own sake, the story has a classic pursuit-and-escape theme which offers plenty of action. The characters, both animal and human, are readily identified with; in fact, in this story, the animals are usually more interesting than the humans.

The reason for this emphasis lies in the attitudes of the first person speaker, a young boy, toward the events he narrates. He feels a fairly obvious internal conflict: on the one hand is his duty to his uncle, who has ordered him to find the fox family which is stealing hens from the farm; on the other is the boy's deep admiration for these charming marauders, and his joy in watching their natural life processes. Since he states his conflict explicitly several times, you should find this a natural story in which to explore with your class the narrative concepts of motivation and point of view.

Except for a single brief flashback to the preceding summer, the story follows a simple chronological pattern. After an exposition in which the speaker defines the problem (the fox family is stealing chickens and the boy has been assigned to find and expose the culprits), the speaker narrates a series of incidents showing the sagacity of the foxes and their methods of training their young. Throughout this narration, the boy's admiration for the foxes becomes increasingly evident (complication), and on more than one occasion, he allows them to escape. Meanwhile, the threat to the foxes from other human sources increases. The boy's uncle, who is still losing hens, says hard words about his nephew's fox-hunting ability, and grows angrier every day.

Finally, the uncle simply takes his shotgun out one day and kills the father fox. The ease with which he accomplishes this task offers a strong contrast to the hesitation in the young boy.

Soon afterwards, one of the dogs uncovers the mother fox's den, and a farm hand kills three of the four cubs. The remaining one is chained up in the farmyard and treated as half captive pet and half a lure for the mother fox. With the keenness he has shown throughout the story, the boy continues to observe the mother fox's ministrations to her cub and her efforts to free it. But in spite of his sympathy for her situation, he makes no move himself to free the cub.

Finally, in the story's climactic moment, he sees the mother fox bring her cub a poisoned chicken head to eat. In the boy's eyes, the mother fox assumes an almost human dignity with this act: "She had to choose for him between death or a prisoner's life. She set him free in the only way she knew." After that, Vixen simply disappears.

The question of most importance for class discussion involves the boy's motivations. How much influence, and what kind, does his attitude toward the foxes have on what happens? Immediately it should become clear that this is not an easy question to answer, for though the boy openly says several times that he admires the foxes, his behavior with regard to them can be seen as wavering or erratic. Only some of his actions seem to favor the foxes (as when he lets Scarface escape and saves the last fox cub); others seem, if not negative, at least neutral (he doesn't prevent the dogs from revealing the location of the den, nor does he assist in Vixen's attempts to free Tip, her captive cub).

Often the boy's posture in the story is simply one of inaction. He takes on the role of an interested and sympathetic observer, whose feelings in the struggle are clear enough, but who refuses to take meaningful or decisive action on either side. And in spite of his expressed admiration for the foxes, he reports their brutality toward the squirrel and the woodchuck with the same matter-of-factness and lack of outward emotion that characterizes his description of the foxes' own suffering.

The class may come up with a wide range of explanations for the boy's action, or lack thereof. They may feel that the boy cannot decide which of his loyalties--to uncle or to foxes--is stronger. In other words, he cannot resolve the conflict in himself, so can only play the role of observer and commentator. Or perhaps the class may sense that his hesitation is caused by some deeper things which he does not directly state, but which seems to be implicit in his whole narration: a respect for the processes of natural law operating around him. That law says you must kill or be killed, eat or be eaten. As the boy expresses it:

> Every animal has some way to save itself. If it did not, it could not live. Every animal also has come weakness. If it did not, other animals would not be able to live.

The boy seems to accept this harsh and unsentimental process as a fact of existence. In the contest between the foxes and man, he knows who is going to win the final round. He can only take delaying action; he cannot prevent the final outcome. Interference would not only be useless, but perhaps also wrong.

Nevertheless, the boy's emotional commitment to the foxes shows through the simplicity and directness of his narration. He makes us share his increasing admiration for the foxes, and his sense of the tragic dignity of the mother in her last action.

Suspense in the story is built up chiefly by various contacts between the foxes and man, contacts which are more threatening and dangerous each

time they occur. Have the class trace these encounters through the story, starting with the foxes' fear of the "man-smell" on the coat they find in the forest. Because the odds against the foxes' survival build up so heavily by the end, there is a good deal of suspense about the final fate of Vixen, the mother fox. We expect her to be shot while attending to her cub, but the author twists our expectations enough to provide us with a compensatory satisfaction--Vixen, at least, is granted freedom. Her sacrificial act saddens us, but we recognize it is necessary. Paradoxically, the only way she can show her love for the last thing she has left is to destroy it. In that act, she becomes a true heroine.

Suggested Questions:

1. The speaker in this story seems to think the fox family has definite personality characteristics. Describe the foxes as he sees them. What kind of personality does Scarface have? Vixen? The cubs? Do we usually think of animals as having personalities?

2. What events in the story show the cleverness of the foxes? Is there anyone more clever than they are? Who is their most feared enemy?

3. Why do you think the boy prefers the foxes to the hens? Does he ever actually say?

4. The boy narrates scenes of death (the foxes' torture of the woodchuck, the incident of the squirrel, etc.) without showing much emotion. Why do you suppose this is so? Does it mean he has no feelings?

5. Is the boy any more emotional when he describes the bad things that happen to the foxes? Explain.

6. Why do you think the boy doesn't help Vixen free her cub? Would you have acted the same way in his place? Explain.

7. What is the more important conflict in this story--the external conflict between the foxes and man, or the internal conflict between the boy's duty to his uncle and his admiration for the foxes? Support your answer by referring to incidents in the story.

Suggested Activities:

1. Have someone in the class give a detailed report on the customs and habits of the fox. Then discuss similarities and differences between the report and the Seton story.

2. Show the class films of foxes in their natural habitat, if such are available.

3. For class discussion: What other woods animals besides the fox have a reputation for cleverness? What qualities or habits give them this reputation?

4. Because so many animal species are being decimated or destroyed completely by man's actions, this story offers a good starting point for discussing what measures we can take to reduce our own destructiveness. Large questions loom here: What should be our attitude toward wild animals? (How important are chickens compared to foxes, in terms of utility or intrinsic worth?) Must man's role in nature always be that of destroyer rather than preserver? What organizations work to preserve nature rather than destroy it? What value or purpose is there in such traditional sporting activities as the fox hunt? See what the class comes up with; you might get enough ideas going to provide some interesting writing assignments.

"The Springfield Fox," from Wild Animals I Have Known, by Ernest Thompson Seton, adapted for The Webster Everyreaders by Ardis E. Burton. Copyright ©1962 by McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "A Man Who Had No Eyes," by MacKinlay Kantor, reprinted in Stories to Enjoy, ed. Ned Hoopes. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967, page 10.

Purpose: To explore narrative structure; surprise ending, coincidence, climax.

Analysis: "'Fraud!' cried the maddened thousands."

One is tempted to treat this story with the shout of the spectators at Mudville's famous game featuring Casey at the bat. But given the critical naivete of our students, it is better to use the story as an example of some of the more obvious tricks of the storyteller's trade. As mature readers, we can recognize the fraud, the slick tricks which Kantor has used for a cheap effect, and deplore his venality. For our students, what lessons about narrative structure are to be gained?

First, of course, is the question of the narrative voice. Who tells the story? The omniscient narrator, naturally. In only this way can the deception be maintained. Ask your class to consider the second and third paragraphs of the story. All these details are given us by the narrator, for Parsons of course is blind. We cannot claim that Kantor has lied to us, but we can note that on the basis of the first short paragraph we are deceived into thinking that these are Parson's observations, not Kantor's. Treat it as a clever device of a clever writer, and see if your class can realize the absolute necessity of his adopting this particular narrative stance.

Second, the long arm of coincidence. The story depends on it. Odd, that after 14 years Parsons and Markwardt should bump into each other like this. Now is as good a time as any to take up the problem of coincidence in life and in fiction. In life, we all recognize the large role that coincidence plays. It is there; it is a fact of life. Writers have every justification in using such a major element in real life in their stories, but for some reason (perhaps because it makes it too easy) we generally are less willing to accept coincidence as a moving force in fiction than we are in fact. Discussion of this curious phenomenon might be profitable, but of primary importance is that your class become aware of the device as a means of moving a narrative along -- or, as in this case, for getting a narrative started. "Guess who I ran into today?"

Third, the "surprise ending." For a further example, refer to the O. Henry story in the anthology, "After Twenty Years." O. Henry's name has become synonymous with the technique of the surprise ending, and some of his efforts, notably "The Gift of the Magi," are not without merit. At any rate, in terms of narrative structure and the basic pyramid of rising action-climax-falling action, the surprise-ending story tends to move its climax to the end of the narrative, eliminating any resolution. The advantage is in the shock value, or surprise; the disadvantage is in the temptation to ignore logic or motivation for the sake of plot manipulation. Again, consideration of the device is more important here than any value judgments.

The plot structure of a surprise-ending story should be your main concern.

Fourth, related to problem three, is what we might call the "credibility gap." Here we get into the question of plot manipulation and normal expectation. The writer of the surprise-ending story frequently must wrench probability. In "After Twenty Years," for example, it is highly unlikely that a wanted criminal would go out of his way to talk to a policeman and risk capture simply to keep a 20-year-old childhood rendezvous. But the plot requires it. In the present story, it is highly unlikely that Parsons, a blinded laborer, could rise to be a successful insurance broker, with all the manner and dignity of a gentleman. But the plot requires it. Such considerations might be fruitful for your class: generally speaking, in a story dominated by the necessities of plot, characterization and probability must suffer.

Tricks of the trade, as we said. This story is brief enough, and its form is obvious enough, so that you could use it to introduce or reinforce many of the concepts you want your class to master.

Suggested Questions:

(Note: the questions that follow the text in the anthology are adequate for understanding and interpretation. The questions below are supplemental.)

1. Every story, as you probably know, has a climax or high point. Chart this story in a diagram, and indicate where the climax comes. What happens afterward?

2. This story depends on coincidence, a chance meeting. How much coincidence is there in real life?

3. A story with a structure like this is usually called a "surprise ending" story. In order to achieve his surprise, the writer must frequently sacrifice something else. What do you think has been sacrificed here?

4. Who tells the story? Could anyone else have told it? Why or why not? Did you feel tricked in any way by the narrator? Discuss.

Suggested Activities:

(Supplemental to those in the text.)

1. This story ends on the climactic moment. Write a finish to it, telling what happened afterwards. Try to use as much dialogue as you can.

2. In the story, there had been a violent explosion in a factory many years ago. We are given some details, but not very many. Using the clues Kantor gives you, write an account of the accident as if you were a newspaper reporter who had been on the scene. Try to make your writing as vivid as possible.

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "A Dangerous Guy Indeed," by Damon Runyon, reprinted in Stories to Enjoy, ed. Ned Hoopes. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967, page 27.

Purpose: To introduce the idea of narrative structure; to apply the idea of the "speaker" in a literary work to narrative.

Analysis: This story deals very unpretentiously with one of the major themes of literature, the conflict between appearance and reality. This conflict, embodied in the confrontation of Morgan Johnson by Wheezer Gamble, is used to illustrate two fundamental aspects of human nature, one expressed by the narrator of the story and the other by his grandfather.

Structurally, the story is simple. Morgan Johnson comes to town, keeps his mouth shut, and does not deny the rumors that spring up around him. One day an old sheepherder, grown pot-valiant in the Greenlight Saloon, challenges him. Johnson flees town, exposed as a total coward, and is never seen again. New rumors grow up around him to replace the old. The incident is used by the narrator's grandfather as an exemplum to point the moral that if you say something often enough about somebody, people will believe it.

If you want to introduce the diagramming of plot structure to your class, you couldn't find a simpler example than this. The mysterious stranger comes to town. In the rising action, the mystery and rumors grow. The crisis comes with the confrontation of the two men. In the falling action the mysterious stranger leaves town and a new equilibrium is established, supported by a new set of rumors.

The "moral" of the story is double. The grandfather's moral is the obvious one, of course. But also, there is the implied commentary on human nature made by the narrator, who points out that the second set of stories about Johnson are probably no more true than the first, but that the townspeople believe them to this day. The town has learned nothing from the incident. People will believe what they want to believe, and the townspeople are living illustrations of grandfather's moral.

Your class will probably remember from their study of poetry the idea of the persona, or the speaker of the poem. Ask them to discuss the same idea here. Who is telling the story, and what sort of person is he? In discussing the narrator Runyon has created, get the class to notice his constant use of the present tense, and his highly idiomatic use of slang. These, of course, are Runyon trademarks, but your students need not have read any Runyon stories to recognize that it is the character of the narrator, his humorous tone and his diction, that gives added richness and enjoyment to this otherwise simple story -- that, indeed, makes us accept grandfather's direct moralizing.

Suggested Questions:

(Note: The questions in the text following the story are quite adequate for comprehension and interpretation. The questions below can be used for additional discussion of structure and of the character of the narrator.)

1. Any good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In this story there is a nice balance between the beginning and the end. What is it? -- (Try to get your class to see the balance here. Johnson comes to town, and is surrounded by one set of rumors; he leaves, and is surrounded by another.)

2. Most stories usually contain what is called a crisis or a climax. Where is the climax of this story? Usually it is possible to diagram the movement of a story in terms of its rising action and its falling action. What would a diagram of this story look like? Where does the climax scene come in your diagram?

3. You may remember from your study of poetry the idea of the speaker in a poem as a character created by the author. The same thing applies in some narratives. Who is the speaker here? What is he like? What means does Damon Runyon use to characterize him?

4. In how many ways does the story illustrate the moral made by the grandfather? -- (See text, question #3)

Suggested Activities:

1. Look up the life of Damon Runyon and report to the class about him.

2. There may be a collection of Runyon stories in your school library. If so, read some of them and compare his style with this story. Does he always write in the same way?

3. Write a story about an incident in your own experience, using Runyon's style to create the character of the narrator.

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "The Old Demon," by Pearl Buck, reprinted in Stories to Enjoy, ed. Ned Hoopes. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967, page 50.

Purpose: To introduce the idea of theme in narrative; to emphasize the importance of character and motivation.

Analysis: This story is the longest, as well as the most mature, of all the narratives covered in this curriculum. Because of this, and because the themes it deals with cannot readily be abstracted into a paraphrase, you may want to wait until the last to treat it.

There are several ways to approach the story. Perhaps the best way to get your class into it is to start with the title, and have them explore its significance. The "Old Demon" is, of course, the river, which the villagers have spent their lives trying to contain behind dikes. Necessary for the irrigation of their crops, it is also a deadly enemy. When in flood, it can destroy everything they have built and lived for, and in the past it has destroyed the husband of old Mrs. Wang, the only major character in the story. At the end of the story, Mrs. Wang deliberately unleashes the "Old Demon," deliberately undoes the work of a lifetime. This is the central irony of the story. You may have to spend some time with your class discussing the idea of irony (which they have met in their poetry) and getting them to see this basic reversal operating here. But it will repay the effort.

Once they see this central irony in the story, then useful questions may be asked. Why did she do it? How did she get that way? What motivated her? The answer should be forthcoming, with a little prodding: Mrs. Wang, her village destroyed, her only relative killed by the Japanese, the sole survivor of her village and family, unleashes the "old" demon to destroy the "new" demon that has wreaked this havoc, the invading Japanese.

So far, so good. What gives this story its excellence, however, is the study of the character of Mrs. Wang--in other words, her motivation. To explore this, it is necessary to go to the front of the story and begin there. You can conveniently deal with the narrative in four main scenes, and see how carefully Mrs. Buck develops the situation.

If one of the themes of the story is the futile destruction caused by war, allied to it is the theme of the individual's ignorance of forces other than those which immediately and directly affect him. (If you want to make this story topical, you might ask your class to visualize Mrs. Wang as an unlearned Vietnamese village woman -- the point is exactly the same.) Mrs. Wang isn't sure she believes in airplanes until she sees one; she doesn't know a Japanese when she sees one; she dislikes the Chinese soldiers as much as she does the Japanese. Remote events and political considerations have no meaning for her; but the death of her brother and the belief that the Japanese want her land move her to action. The story can be seen, then, as a study of the reactions of the simple peasant caught up in a war, and Mrs. Wang as a sort of Everyman. The four major scenes of the story develop this theme.

Scene One shows us Mrs. Wang as honored elder of her village, autocratic in her simple way, in her daily ritual of inspecting the dike. The major facets of her character, as well as the necessary expository material, are rapidly sketched in. The war is not real, for "none of the Wangs had been killed." Mrs. Wang's ideas are simple: "Anyone who does not look like us -- that is a Japanese." This sets up a later irony of her thinking a real Japanese is a Chinese from another province. The digression about her husband in the Buddhist purgatory may be too confusing to bother your class with. The point of its inclusion is to illustrate the old lady's practical nature. She may decide to get her husband out when she has the ten dollars to spare but for now her grandson and wife and child are of more immediate concern. The scene closes with Mrs. Wang drifting off to sleep, "Thinking about the Japanese and why they wanted to fight."

Scene Two opens with the bombing of the village and the departure of all but Mrs. Wang. Again, her concerns and character are illustrated. She shoos off her granddaughter with a concern for the family line. Alone in the destroyed village, she takes a childlike interest in the dogfight in the sky above her. When one of the planes falls she goes to look at it out of curiosity. "At her age she need be afraid of nothing." She finds and tries to save the wounded Japanese flier, thinking he is Chinese. The loss of her house does not seem to disturb her; with her intense practicality she finds some bread in the ruined bakery and tries to feed the wounded flier.

Scene Three involves the Chinese soldiers and Mrs. Wang's discovery of the immediacy of war. She learns from the Chinese that the wounded man is Japanese, but the author emphasizes the fact that she develops a strong dislike for the Chinese. The point is clear enough: to the villager, the uniform of the soldier makes little difference. All are destructive, allies or enemies.

The climax of the story comes in this scene. First Mrs. Wang is given a reason for the war that she can understand. She asks why the Japanese caused all the destruction. "Why? That's what I don't understand."

"Why? Because they want our land, that's why!"

"Our land!" she repeated. "Why, they can't have our land!"

She next learns of the death of her only brother in her old village. War has now been translated into terms immediate enough for her to comprehend. And so now she is prepared to act. Having tried in vain to save a single Japanese, she is now prepared to try to drown a whole army. Her motivation is clear. She thinks the Japanese are looking for her and her grandson and his wife. No concern with grand strategy and battle tactics intrudes on her concern with the here and now.

Scene Four is the opening of the dike. After the rather long build-up to the climactic scene, the story ends swiftly. With a resigned fatalism, she opens the water-gate, and the "Old Demon" sweeps forth to do his work, to keep the enemy from "marching nearer and nearer to her and to Little Pig and his wife." That she drowns in the process is cause for no more than a moment's regret on her part: "'I'm only one old woman,' she muttered."

If your class has been able to stay with you thus far, you may wish to explore with them the reasons for the maturity and apparent difficulty of this story as opposed to some of the others they have read. Several reasons present themselves. The first is the fact of the central irony of the story mentioned above. For some reason, elementary grade children have difficulty understanding and appreciating irony when they encounter it--anywhere but in their own conversation or on television, where of course it abounds.

But more important for our purposes is the fact that this story, of all they will have read, is a complete mixture of form and theme. Mrs. Buck shows us Mrs. Wang, but does not tell us what to think of her. The theme of war, the theme of the individual caught up in a whirlwind of forces, the theme of simple, direct, and immediate response to a situation, -- these are embedded in the story, but are never presented as a moral, or as the reflections of an author or a character in the story. The themes must be abstracted from the story itself, from the total significance of the events presented. If your class is capable of such concepts, you can generate a very rich discussion of the story itself, as well as its literary qualities. If not, carry it as far as you can, and then let it go.

Readiness:

1. History: Japan invaded China in the 1930's, and wreaked tremendous destruction. This was pre-A-Bomb, pre-WW II, pre-TV, pre-missile, pre-Huntley-Brinkley. In other words, pre-historic. For your class, a little map work, and a little history, will help them realize the universal application of the themes treated in this story. Japanese and Chinese are not the point; try German and Dutch in WW II, or Vietnamese in the current conflict.

2. Buddha and the Purgatory problem: Avoid it if possible. She has to pay the priests to pray her husband out of Purgatory.

3. The "Old Demon": The Yangzte River, a raging torrent in the spring floods, the source of needed irrigation to the Chinese peasant villages, but also a "Demon" never to be trusted, and deified as a river-god. They must live close to it, but do so at a tremendous risk. In pre-machine times, most of the work was involved in building a dirt dike to hold the river in check. Cf. our own Mississippi floods.

4. The peasant mentality, which deals with the here and now. Ask your class which affects them most, the death of thirty thousand Turks in an earthquake, or seeing their dog run over. Same principle. Mrs. Wang is strictly "gut-level" in her response, but then who is not?

Suggested Questions:

(Supplemental to questions in the text)

1. This story can be divided into four major scenes. What are they?

How do they fit into each other? How does the character of Mrs. Wang hold the scenes together? Is she ever "offstage"?

2. Most stories have a climax scene. Where does the climax occur in this story? How well motivated is it?

3. What is the point (or points) of this story? How do you know? Where can you find evidence for your ideas? Does Mrs. Buck ever tell you what to think?

4. Diagram this story. Where does the climax come? Which is longer, the rising action or the falling action? Why do you think this is so? What connection does this form have with the main focus of the story on Mrs. Wang's character?

Suggested Activities:

(Supplemental to questions on the text)

1. What are the four major scenes of this story? How do they fit together? Write a composition discussing them and the way they fit.

2. Pick one of Mrs. Wang's characteristics that most impressed you, and show how the author developed it. Through statement? Through dialogue? Through description? How?

3. Mrs. Wang stands for all the little people in the world who are caught up in a war. Write a composition in which you discuss her attitude, and compare it with your own. Have you ever been a victim of forces beyond your control? If so, discuss it in a paper.

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "Night Drive," by Will F. Jenkins, reprinted in Stories to Enjoy, ed. Ned Hoopes. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967, page 82.

Purpose: To acquaint students with a common type of narrative pattern, the mystery story.

Analysis: A good mystery story is sort of an intellectual guessing game between the writer and the reader (or listener). The writer's aim is to keep the reader in doubt about the real facts until the last possible moment, all the while building suspense to a maximum pitch. If the story is well-constructed, the reader may not be able to put all the pieces together before the climax--in fact, if he can do this, the story might be much less entertaining. The reader of a mystery wants to be surprised; his biggest pleasure comes after he has finished the story and realizes that the writer has outwitted him, keeping always one step ahead, yet providing all the necessary "clues" so that what seemed superfluous or irrelevant suddenly fits into a meaningful pattern. Obviously, mystery stories require careful arrangement of detail and incident. That is why a successful mystery story like Will Jenkins' "Night Drive" is a most useful vehicle for teaching narrative pattern.

Since a mystery story builds up its suspense gradually, there cannot be a nice, neat separation between the exposition, or background, and the complication, or present conflict, which the background is supposed to illuminate. Instead, details from the past are sprinkled into the present, either to add to our knowledge of it or to change earlier-formed impressions. What we get is sort of back-and-forth mixing of exposition and complication all the way to the climax.

This kind of mixing occurs in "Night Drive." Jenkins has carefully structured details from the past and present so that right up to the fight between Tabor and Bob, we are unsure about who is really the murderer. And even the climax does not illuminate everything. All we know is that Madge hears a sound in the darkness (presumably the death-battle between Tabor and Bob), and races away in the car. Her fear-strained mind does fit all the previous details into a coherent pattern (in the two paragraphs immediately following the climax), but the mystery is still only partially explained.

You might ask your students to consider why Jenkins does not directly present the fight between Bob and Mr. Tabor. It is certainly the most important event in the story--why, then, leave it in shadow? A possible answer: As readers, we presume that in finally identifying the real murderer, Jenkins has "played all his trumps" in the story--that is, he has exhausted the possibilities for mystery inherent in the situation he has created. But by not revealing what happened after Madge drove off, he maintains some suspense to the very end; we are never completely sure what happened. Even the reactions of Mrs. Haley's husband are ambiguous. When he comes back from investigating his wife's story, his words ("Nothing's happened. Nothing! Understand?") could mean either of two things:

1. He disbelieves Madge's story entirely and is "white" because he is concerned over her hysterical reactions and wants her to forget the whole thing; or

2. He believes her story but does not want the facts revealed to anyone, and so instructs her to act as if nothing happened.

In either case, we never know what happened to Bob. We can only guess. And Jenkins leaves us guessing right through the final encounter between Madge and Mr. Tabor, when the latter tips his hat--this time, a man's hat--and quietly disappears.

If you want to diagram the story structure for your class, it might look something like this: (refer to next page).

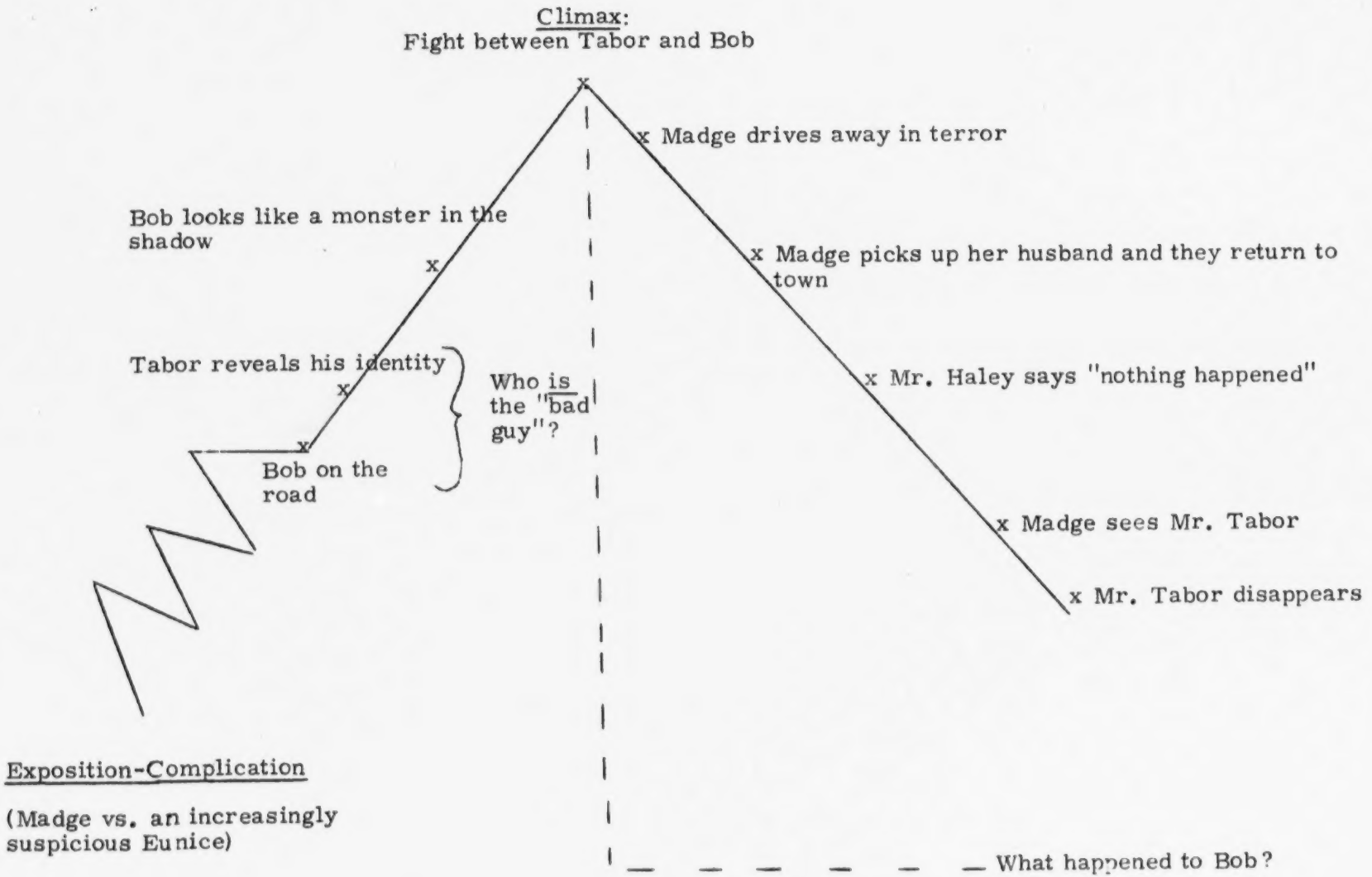
Go back through the story and have the students pick out details they passed by earlier, but which they can now see as part of the total pattern of incident. A few examples should get them started: on the phone Mr. Tabor "sounded as if he had a bad cold," indicating that he was deliberately changing his voice so that Madge wouldn't recognize him in his disguise as Eunice. Tabor carefully says on the phone that he "has to leave," so he won't be there when Madge comes to pick up Eunice. When Madge arrives only moments later, the house is "already darkened." Eunice's physical appearance is strange from the beginning: she is "angular and clumsy," and speaks "in a flat voice." In order to make Tabor's disguise plausible, Jenkins casually plants in Madge's thoughts the detail that Tabor was "a small man." Eunice's tinted spectacles, innocent enough at first, begin to take on sinister meaning during the conversation about killers who are afraid to show their eyes. And so on. If they peruse the story carefully, the class will see how thoroughly Jenkins has laid the foundation for what happens later.

Some other standard devices of suspense are also worth their attention. Sometimes Jenkins will make a suspicious statement, then keep the reader waiting through several sentences before he reveals its significance. For instance, when Madge has her cigarette lighted, two paragraphs occur between her horrified thought that "everything was different" and the statement that "Eunice was a man."

Besides using this "delaying action" to achieve suspense, Jenkins contrasts the beauty of the setting with the ugliness of the situation, as in these thoughts which occur to Madge just after she has discovered Eunice's maleness and has passed the only place of safety between the cut-off and Colchester:

> She went driving on through the night with the muscles of her throat constricted and an icy horror filling all her veins. It was a beautiful night. It was a warm and an odorous and a softly romantic night.

The contrast could hardly be more abrupt--or more effective in generating suspense.


Climax:
Fight between Tabor and Bob
x Madge drives away in terror
Bob looks like a monster in the shadow
x Madge picks up her husband and they return to town
Tabor reveals his identity
Who is the "bad guy"?
x Mr. Haley says "nothing happened"
Bob on the road
x Madge sees Mr. Tabor
x Mr. Tabor disappears
Exposition-Complication
(Madge vs. an increasingly suspicious Eunice)
What happened to Bob?

These latter considerations may be a bit subtle for the class. The important thing to impress upon them is the care Jenkins has taken in constructing his narrative scheme. Good narrative does not just "happen"; it is made to happen.

Suggested Questions:

(Supplementary to questions in text)

1. In this story, can we clearly see where the background explanation ends and the complication or problem begins?

2. Why do you suppose the author doesn't describe the fight between Mr. Tabor and Bob?

3. Do the thoughts that Madge has just after she drives away from the fight provide a completely satisfying explanation of the plot?

4. Do we ever learn what happened to Bob?

Suggested Activities:

1. Find some other mystery stories suitable to this age group and read them to the class. Then discuss what narrative techniques they have in common with Jenkins' story.

2. Have the students try to write a short, suspense-filled mystery story, either alone, in small groups, or as a class.

Additional Story:

"The Monkey's Paw," by W.W. Jacobs (Stories to Enjoy, p. 103)

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "Locomotive 38, the Ojibway," by William Saroyan, reprinted in Stories to Enjoy, ed. Ned Hoopes. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967, page 122.

Purpose: Primarily, to enjoy an amusing story containing two unusual characters; also, to examine the effect point of view has on the way a story is told.

Analysis: One of our chief pleasures in reading a story is vicarious participation in the experiences narrated. The success story and the fairy tale especially appeal to us because they enable us to identify with the characters' good fortune and to indulge in a little wish-fulfillment of our own. "Locomotive 38, the Ojibway" elicits this kind of reader response--what boy wouldn't appreciate the opportunities laid before Aram ("Willie") by the unusual Indian in Saroyan's amusing story? Here are elements of fantasy presented in a quite down-to-earth, realistic manner; here is a story that lightly touches upon some serious truths about people.

No very deep analysis is necessary or desirable; let the class enjoy the story for its own sake. The main narrative element you will want to investigate is motivation--the Indian's reasons for acting as he does toward Willie. Those actions reveal both his personality and Willie's. The refreshing warmth of these two characters, and the relationship that develops between them, are an indication of William Saroyan's humanity and his skill as a storyteller.

Have your class list the ways in which the boy and the Indian are appealing. Willie's outstanding feature is his self-confidence, his conviction that he "knows" how to do things before he has done them, and that he "likes" places before he has seen them. He is also an astute judge of character, taking people as they are rather than as others see them. Unlike the townspeople, he appreciates Locomotive's uniqueness; he doesn't think the Indian is "crazy" merely because his behavior is unusual. It is undoubtedly his zest for life, his openness to new experience, and his straightforward attitudes toward people that attract the interest of the Ojibway.

Locomotive himself is a rare character, breaking in almost every way our established stereotypes about Indians, rich or otherwise. It is evident that he is no fool; he judges characters and events as clearsightedly as Willie, and with the added advantage of age. Our first clue to his unusual personality is that he arrives in town on a donkey (with his wealth, it could easily have been a Packard) and begins loafing around in, of all places, the public library (wouldn't we have expected him to seek out the local tavern?). Locomotive accepts with amused composure the town's general opinion that he is "crazy," for he knows that his wealth will clear all paths for him, once he decides to use it. But his attitude toward his great wealth is pleasantly unassuming; having money hasn't turned his head. The only ostentatious act he performs is buying the Packard, and that is more for the boy's enjoyment than for his own.

The Indian expresses an interesting theory about the differing instinctive talents of Indians and "Americans" (the former, he says, naturally take to outdoor activities; the latter are mechanically inclined), but by the end of the story we realize these notions have been advanced for the boy's benefit and the Indian's amusement. Locomotive seems to have wanted to give Willie the chance to find things out for himself; this is surely why he offers the boy no advice on fishing or hunting, though he is probably as expert in those pursuits as he is in driving. The role he adopts with regard to the boy--that of wish-fulfiller and friend--makes him an admirable and memorable character, a sort of latter-day fairy godfather.

You might call attention to the importance of Willie's role as narrator in this story. We would not expect a young boy to indulge in much descriptive reflection or character analysis, and such is the case in Saroyan's story. Willie confines himself mostly to reporting what was said, heard, and seen--so dialogue between the characters is the chief device that moves the story along. If you can get your students to imagine what the story would be like if narrated by the Indian, presumably a much more speculative person, they should begin to understand the influence of point of view on the way a story is told.

In presenting the story of Locomotive's friendship with Willie, Saroyan lightly touches on some themes that are quite serious in themselves: the difference between appearance and reality (the townspeople judge the Indian only by surface indicators--he is a rich man in a poor man's garb); small town snobbery (merely because Locomotive's behavior is different, he is regarded as "crazy"); and the American worship of material wealth (shown in the Indian's statements to Willie, and also in the toadying of the local car dealer, who is marvelously characterized in the single detail that he "used to run for mayor every time election time came around"). Locomotive's comment about his grandfather's "moving west when everybody else did" may be a veiled reference to the American Indian's sorry treatment at the hands of advancing settlers.

But the story's dominant mood is large-hearted. Saroyan is obviously well aware of human foibles, but he seems more hopeful about the possibilities for warmth between people. There may be some wish-fulfillment in that hope--but there is also a great deal of reality.

<u>Suggested Questions:</u>

(Supplementary to those in the text)

1. How would this story be different if narrated by the Indian instead of Willie? How would it be different if narrated by the automobile dealer?

2. What kind of person do you think Willie was? Why do you think Locomotive was more interested in Willie than in the other people in the town?

Suggested Activities:

1. Show the class a picture of a 1922 Packard. With this model plus the details given in the story, have them draw a picture of Willie and the Indian dashing down the highway in the car.

2. Like this story, Damon Runyon's "A Dangerous Guy Indeed" deals with the theme of the difference between appearance and reality. Ask the class to discuss how the two treatments are similar and how different.

3. Have the students suppose that Locomotive 38 came into their lives, offering them the same chances for wish fulfillment that Willie had. Ask them to write a story about this. How would they strike up a friendship with the Indian? What kinds of things would they want to do if given the chance? This can go as far as their imaginations will permit.

Narrative
Teacher

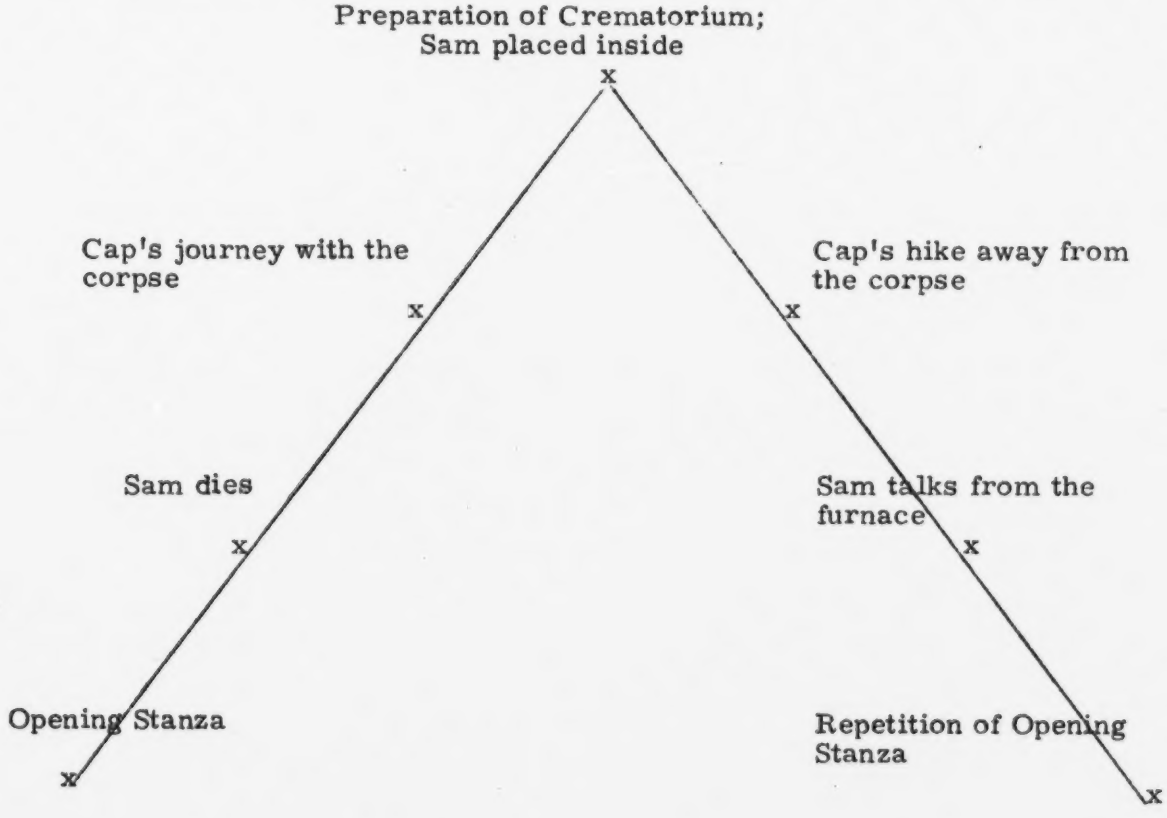
Literature V-VI

Selection: "The Cremation of Sam McGee," by Robert W. Service, reprinted in The Charge of the Light Brigade and Other Story Poems. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1969, page 44.

Purpose: To examine a narrative that is structured toward a surprise ending; to see how various devices of language can be used to heighten emotional intensity in a narrative.

Analysis: "The Cremation of Sam McGee" rightly occupies a high place among our "tall tales." It is packed with narrative elements that fascinate children and adults alike: an exotic, forbidding setting; a gruesome plot; an exuberance of rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and figurative language; and one of the most famous surprise endings in our literature. The poem depends for its effect upon building up a mood of suspenseful horror and then smashing it completely in the closing lines. As with all good tall tales, we are more entertained than angered at the way the story has "taken us in."

Beneath its bouncy surface, the poem reveals a fairly careful narrative construction, with some satisfying contrasts and reversals. If your class likes to diagram, see how close you can get them to duplicating the one shown below:



You need not belabor the scheme with the class; they may find it needlessly complicated. But you should at least call their attention to Service's use of identical opening and closing stanzas. In the beginning, the lines set an appropriate mood of mystery for the "horror story" that is to follow. The repetition of these lines after the horror has been deflated by the humorous surprise ending is a masterful touch; the lines take on an entirely different tone than they had at the beginning. Thus they serve both as a unifying device, bringing the narrative "full circle," and as an indication that some internal change or progression has taken place in the central stanzas.

You can get at concepts like character and motivation by discussing the poem in the traditional terms of exposition, complication, and climax.

Exposition: stanzas 2-6

These stanzas introduce the characters and the situation. Cap, the narrator, and Sam McGee, whose dominant personal trait is hatred of the bitter Arctic cold, are out on the Dawson Trail. Since it appears Sam has not much longer to live, he exacts from his friend a promise to cremate his remains. Sam grows steadily weaker, raves of his home in Tennessee and his "dread of the icy grave," and dies.

Complication: stanzas 7-9

As he hauls the body of Sam McGee across the frozen wasteland, Cap reveals his character in the increasing conflict he feels between his promise to his chum (which, in the "stern code" of the trail, is absolutely binding), and his emotional revulsion at his cargo, which has ceased to be human in his eyes. The starkness of the setting further complicates Cap's state of mind: he and the corpse are completely alone on this vast white desert, the dogs howl mournfully at night, the food supply is dwindling--and always, always, there is the bone-chilling cold. The poem does not directly mention a fact which is obviously the greatest complication of all: Cap is hauling Sam's corpse around simply because in this polar region there is not enough wood to cremate him.

Minor climax: stanzas 10-13

On the shore of Lake Lebarge, Cap at last comes upon a sufficient supply of wood to do what he has promised. An old broken down ship is frozen in the lake, and he uses its wood, coal, and boiler room to construct a crematorium. His problem appears solved and his pledge fulfilled as he "stuffs" Sam into the crematorium--but the story is not over yet. As he hikes away while Sam "sizzles," Cap is still possessed by a "grisly fear."

Climax: stanzas 13-14

Cap returns with trepidation and takes a look inside the crematorium --only to see Sam sitting up warm and cozy, declaring it's the first time he's been warm since he left his home. All the built up horror and suspense have been for the sake of this fantastic sight. The effect is immediate, deflating, humorous.

The preceding should provide more than enough narrative analysis for your students, and they will be ready to go on to examine the various devices Service uses to build up suspense and emotional coloring in the poem. First of all, its pounding, insistent rhythm and its abundant rhyme and alliteration have a hammer-like effect, generating increasing emotional tension as the narrative moves to a climax. Service uses a wealth of figurative language to contribute to this effect: Nature is personified in the heavens which "scowl" down on the cremation, not the first of the "queer sights" that the "northern lights" have "seen" in this strange region. Similes provide descriptive heightening: the cold stabs "like a driven nail" and the smoke from the crematorium seems like "an inky cloak." There are some wonderful visual and auditory images: Sam crouching on the sleigh and raving about his home in Tennessee; Cap sitting out the long night surrounded by his howling dogs, Cap "stuffing" Sam into the furnace, where the body "sizzles" and "cooks." Here is the homely bluntness--and the humor--of the frontier.

Hyperbole, one of the most common characteristics of the tall tale, occurs throughout the poem. The setting itself is extreme: Sam is "chilled through to the bone," and "there wasn't a breath in that land of death." Service turns the device to humorous ends in the last stanza, when Sam wears "a smile you could see for a mile," and declares it's the first time he's been warm since he left Tennessee.

The suspenseful progress of the narrative can also be judged by the various labels the fear-maddened Cap applies to Sam's body. From a "corpse" and a "load," it becomes a "thing," some "clay," and finally "the hateful thing." During his long, lonely journey, the body has ceased being human to him. Curiously enough, it is not until he reaches Lake Lebarge and sees an imminent end to his ordeal that he once again speaks of Sam's body in human terms, as "my frozen chum." For a narrative poem, this is a pretty subtle way to indicate emotional change in a character.

It is only after we have finished the poem and been let in on the joke that we see how nicely everything fits together. We remember, for instance, such carefully planted details as Sam's comment in the second stanza that "he'd sooner live in hell" than in the Yukon. In a most unusual way he gets his wish, and we get great entertainment from watching it being fulfilled.

Readiness:

1. You may want to prepare your students for the poem by giving them some background on the Yukon: location, climate (besides the cold, explain phenomena like the "midnight sun" and "northern lights"), and, in particular, the frontier characteristics of Alaska's gold rush days. What kinds of people were attracted to the Yukon in those days, and why? What kind of social organization was to be found in a frontier camp? See what the students know about the California gold rush--some of its characteristics are applicable here.

2. Vocabulary:

moil: to drudge or work hard

marge: shore or "margin" of a lake

cremate: to burn a body, as opposed to burying it

crematorium: chamber in which a body is burned

mushing: travelling over snow with a sled drawn by dogs

cash in: i.e., die; a slang term

tax: i.e., ponder a problem over and over in one's head

brawn: body or muscles

derelict: an abandoned, broken down ship

trice: an instant

Suggested Questions:

1. Where does the story take place? What effect does the setting have on the characters? On the incidents?

2. Identify the characters. Who is the speaker in the poem?

3. What is Sam's greatest fear? What promise does he get from Cap?

4. As we read the poem, we realize that Cap also has a great fear. What is it? --(irrational fear of corpses) How does the poem show us this fear? --(various names Cap applies to the body) In Cap's situation, would most people have felt as he did?

5. As you think over the events, what is the story's central conflict or problem? Is the conflict internal, or caused by external circumstances, or is it a combination of both?

6. What is the climax, or most important event of the story? In which stanza does it occur?

7. Exaggeration is sometimes used for humorous purposes and to aid in description. Do you find any exaggeration in this poem? What is it used for?

8. How would you describe the poem's rhyme and rhythm? Why do you think Service chose such a rhythm?

9. The poet uses many figurative devices you have studied before--similes, metaphors, and visual and auditory imagery. Find examples of each in the poem. What effect do you get from the thought of Sam's body "sizzling" and "cooking" in the furnace?

10. Notice that the poem begins and ends with the same stanza. Why do you think Service repeats the opening lines? Do they have the same effect on you at the end as they had at the beginning?

Suggested Activities:

1. "The Cremation of Sam McGee" is set in approximately the same kind of climate as "The Story of Keesh." What similarities and differences can you see in the effect of this climate on the two sets of characters? --(For the characters in both stories, the climate is something to be struggled with. Keesh overcomes the harsh environment, while Sam McGee is beaten by it, and Cap almost succumbs too.)

2. Play a record of someone reading "The Cremation of Sam McGee" and perhaps some of Service's other Yukon poems.

3. If any of your students have seen John Wayne's movie "North to Alaska," which depicts Alaska gold rush days, ask them to compare its treatment with that of the poem.

4. There are many fascinating stories about the Yukon. Find a short story which has some features in common with this poem and read it to the class, pointing out once again that a story is a story, whether it be told in prose or in poetry.

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "The Highwayman," by Alfred Noyes, reprinted in The Charge of the Light Brigade and Other Story Poems. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1969, page 22.

Purpose: A sort of total review, poetry and narrative.

Analysis: The poetry section of this curriculum ended in a unit on "The Whole Poem," in which we suggested that the way your class could handle the poems offered therein would be a rough index of the success of this curriculum as well as your presentation. So, too, with "The Highwayman." If your class can get all out of this narrative poem that it contains, then we can feel a mutual sense of gratification. We will mention below a few things that should be noted, but we suggest that here, as in "The Whole Poem," the discussion should follow its own course rather than be guided by any questions we might suggest.

This poem is as difficult, although for different reasons, as was Pearl Buck's story "The Old Demon." To eliminate superficial obstacles, you will need to go through some readiness discussion.

Readiness: The era, roughly, is the late 18th century in England. Travel was difficult: stages, lonely highways, isolated inns, poor law enforcement. Highwaymen, literally, were men who lived off the travellers on the King's highway, i.e., bandits who held up the stagecoach à la our Westerns. Much of the law enforcement was vested in the military (the "redcoats," who were "King George's men"). Compare again with the cavalry in the Western. In literature, highwaymen (like Robin Hood or Jesse James) were frequently romanticized. The justification for such a romanticization was the nearly unbelievable inequity and oppression which characterized the social structure of the times.

Some other details may need explication. The costume of the highwayman (see stanza 2) is a romanticized and dashingly cavalier outfit, but is not sissified in any way by such details as "a bunch of lace at his throat." The effect is intended to be the same as our current picture of the suave, faultlessly dressed international bandit.

Vocabulary: claret - wine red; rapier - a sword; ostler - a stable hand; harry - chase; brand - a glowing piece of metal; moor - high barrens; casement - window; priming - the charge of powder in a musket, before the invention of the cartridge; blanched - paled.

The Story: Noyes depends on us to supply the connectives. Some of your students may not get them. Here is the place to discuss the problem of motivation, which will help them understand the story. Incident and character are definitely connected, though only the incident is described. Tim the ostler (a dog-in-the-manger type - remember the fable?), overhearing the talk of the lovers, rats to the fuzz, who come marching up the next day to ambush the highwayman. Sadistically they plan their ambush from Bess's window, and as an added refinement tie her to the end of her bed in a position of military attention with a musket beside her. Their

cruelty backfires as she succeeds in warning her lover, but there is irony in that her warning costs her life. She saves his life with her death. Why does he come back? He is driven mad with rage and love, and all his native caution is erased by his passion for revenge. Here is the final irony: her sacrifice was in vain, for it is her sacrifice which motivates his return, in which he himself is killed. We can only guess at Tim the ostler: does he savor his sterile victory? The story is built on a series of ironies.

As with any such story built on irony, the narrative line follows a series of reversals and false climaxes. The innocent plans of the lovers are reversed by the success of Tim's interference; the success of his plans is reversed by her warning (love's triumph in the face of death); her success is reversed by his love (death's triumph over love); Tim's success is reversed by her death. Who wins? King George's men. An ironic romantic tragedy. You might make some interesting connections with Thayer's treatment of Casey: a similar sort of defeat with an entirely different tone.

The Poetry: In this, more than in the other story-poems, the poetic techniques are obvious, and contribute a great deal to the romanticized atmosphere. The selection, then, as a sort of final exercise, can be used for a review of the poetry units as well as the narrative. See if your class can't tie the whole thing together. We will note below some of the more obvious poetic effects they should be able to notice; ask them to discuss the effect of these devices on the total impact of the story.

Metaphor. All over the place. Lines 1-3 are quite vivid, and are frequently cited as examples of metaphor. But metaphor in this poem is pervasive. "Jewelled sky," "His eyes were hollows of madness," "Black cascade of perfume" (a double metaphor), "the road was a gypsy's ribbon," etc.

Simile. "hair like moldy hay," "dumb as a dog," "burnt like a brand," "down like a dog," etc.

Imagery. All over the place. The poem is drenched in color and sound. We hardly need list examples. Onomatopoeia is there in "tlot tlot," "shrieking," and the like.

Rhyme and rhythm. Obvious.

Hyperbole. The whole poem is a romantic hyperbole, but your class is probably not up to that. But try "though Hell should bar the way" as a lover's hyperbole, comparable to "till all the seas gang dry, my dear."

There are other effects to be found. "Death at every window," for instance, is a rather weak personification. But a listing of everything in the poem would get tedious. The point is to have your students see what they can find and see how it contributes.

If they enjoy the poem, if they can find the various poetic effects and discuss their contribution, if they can see the series of ironies which underlie the form of the narrative, if they can begin to articulate an understanding of all the ingredients that make this poem perennially popular, good. As we suggested with "The Whole Poem," ask them "What's going on here?" and see what happens.

Selection: "The Witch of Willowby Wood," by Rowena Bennett, reprinted in The Charge of the Light Brigade and Other Story Poems. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1969, page 53.

Purpose: To reinforce the point that even a simple poem may contain all the basic elements of narrative.

Analysis: "The Witch of Willowby Wood" demands to be read aloud. Its rollicking rhythm, alliteration, and internal rhyme should make it an especially enjoyable listening experience for your students. It also provides a good brief review of some of the concepts studied earlier in the poetry units.

Our main intention in this unit, however, is to reinforce the point made with "Casey at the Bat"--that poetry as well as prose can "tell a story." Like "Casey," this poem contains all the basic elements of narrative, some of which, considering its brevity, are handled quite cleverly. But it is far simpler than the earlier poem, and will bear much less analysis. You will probably do well to present it primarily as entertainment, and then gently prod your students into searching out its narrative components.

The plot structure could hardly be simpler: witch builds house (exposition), mouse threatens to destroy house by gnawing it down (complication), witch gets rid of threat by changing mouse into bat (climax and resolution). Your students should have no trouble seeing that the situation at the beginning of the story--witch at mercy of mouse--is completely reversed at the end--witch gets revenge. A classic narrative pattern. About the only complicated fact they will need to grasp is that the roof of the house, unlike the doorpost, is not amenable to gnawing. And the story makes a point of emphasizing this detail.

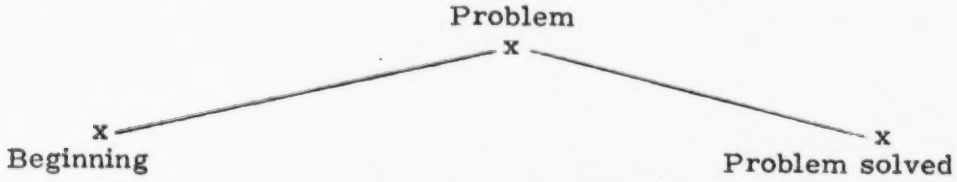
Though brief, the poem manages to convey quite a few specific details about its two characters. As you re-read it to the class, have them list the qualities of the witch and the mouse. They offer an obvious contrast between "good" and "bad"--the witch, though ugly and gnarled as one expects witches to be, is clearly the victim of circumstances and the character we sympathize with. The mouse provokes the conflict, and we are given no explanation for his villainy other than that "he was noted for being a scoundrel and scamp." Thus, when the witch finally uses her powers to revenge herself on the mouse, we feel the punishment is deserved. Yet the tone is light at all times--we enjoy the sauciness of the mouse, who reminds us of a child teasing his mother to the point of exasperation.

Since most of your students will be familiar with the story of Hansel and Gretel, you might compare the witch in this poem with her more celebrated sister. Have the students speculate on how the ending might be different if our little mouse had had the temerity to gnaw on the latter lady's gingerbread house. His could be an amusing way to remind them that in narrative, character influences incident.

Suggested Questions:

1. What is the problem or conflict in this story?

2. If you made a diagram of the events in this story, what would you say happened in each place?



3. What kind of person is the witch? List the words in the poem that characterize and describe her.

4. What kind of character is the mouse? Are we given any reasons for his actions?

5. Who do we sympathize with in this story and why?

6. If the mouse had outwitted the witch in this story, how might the ending have been different?

7. If the witch in this story had been like the witch in "Hansel and Gretel," how might the ending have been different?

8. Can you think of another way the witch could have solved her problem?

Suggested Activities:

1. The witch in this poem tells the mouse she will use him as "a good warning to other bad mice, who won't earn their bread but go stealing a slice." Find and discuss some other well-known stories expressing the moral that we must earn our bread rather than steal it.

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "Casey at the Bat," by Ernest Thayer, reprinted in The Charge of the Light Brigade and Other Story Poems. New York: Scholastic Book Service, 1969, page 61.

Purpose: To illustrate the concept of narrative structure in story poems.

Analysis: If your class has been discussing the short stories that precede this section on story poems, they should have become familiar with some of the basic aspects of narrative structure. Our purpose in including these poems is to illustrate the concept that narrative is not the exclusive possession of prose. A story told in verse is still a story; the idea of a narrative is more fundamental than the particular form it takes. Poetic techniques can heighten our enjoyment of a story, but they do not replace the basic structure. If you tell your students that you are about to read them a story, and then give them one of these poems, they will begin to see the point we are trying to make.

In discussion you might point out to them that traditionally, verse has been the vehicle for much narrative. The Iliad, the Odyssey, many medieval narratives, ballads of course, all were originally verse. Indeed, it is only in the last couple of hundred years that prose has risen to its predominant position as a vehicle for imaginative narrative. The story-poem has a long and honorable lineage, and "Casey at the Bat" follows a rich tradition.

As one might expect, "Casey" exhibits those aspects of verse which are most obvious in an oral tradition -- a regular rhythm, an obvious and heavy use of rhyme -- and fewer of those effects which are associated with the close reading of a printed lyric poem. Thus it serves to illustrate the idea that poetic technique graces a narrative, but does not subsume it.

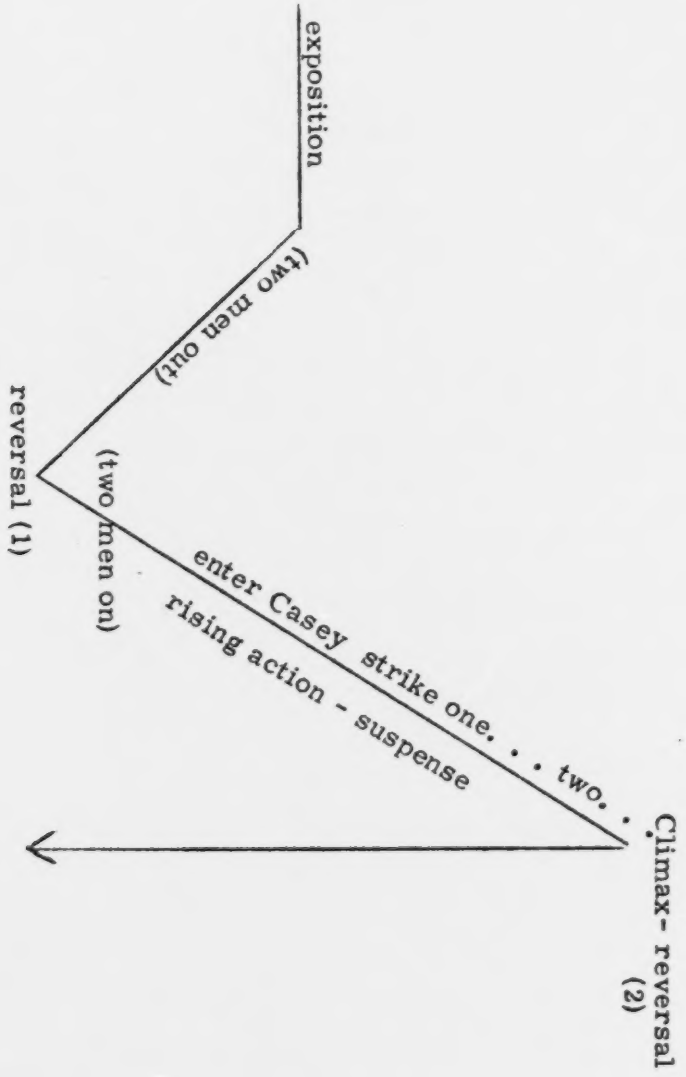
The narrative structure is very interesting. Of course the situation -- a baseball game with its built-in potential for tension based on a system of threes -- lends itself perfectly to the sort of suspense that Thayer builds up. Note in the first stanza the rapid sketching of the needed exposition, and the quick elimination of the first two batters. Bottom of the ninth, two out, home team behind 4-2. A classic American situation, and one perfectly designed for the entrance of a hero (will your students be able to see this poem as a humorous inversion of the traditional hero story?).

The next two stanzas provide a sort of minor climax, and offer a false hope which make the final let-down even worse (or better, depending on whether you are a Mudville fan or a literary analyst). If only the hero would come, Mudville could still be saved. But obstacles prevent his coming; and then magically the obstacles are removed. This is the first reversal, from deep gloom to wild hope.

Enter the hero, absolutely in command of the situation. He moves with dignity and pride, responding graciously to the tribute of the crowd. He saves the umpire from near-lynching. Thayer is building him up to heroic size in preparation for the big fizzle.

The suspense continues to mount, as Thayer takes advantage of the rules of baseball. You will notice that this final section is quite extended, compared to the earlier sections. Finally everything is screwed to its tightest pitch: bottom of the ninth, 4-2, men on second and third, winning run at the plate, two out, two strikes on the batter. Will the hero save the day? The windup, the pitch, he swings! . . . pffft. End of game, end of story, deflation of hero. A classic American anti-romance.

Why do we enjoy this poem so much? For several reasons, among them the fact that Thayer has so characterized Casey as to make him ridiculously pompous, and is thus able to make a comic inversion of the hero tale. Further, the poetry helps, and further still, the basic situation is one that is totally familiar to an American audience. But also, the story is well put together in its proportions, its balance, its total design. You may wish to discuss this aspect of the story with your class. A diagram of the story line will show how well Thayer has done his work.



Suggested Questions:

1. Describe the state of the ballgame at the beginning of the poem. Describe what happens during the action of the story.

2. What is suspense? How does the poet make use of the rules of baseball to build suspense? Does the way his story is put together contribute to the suspense?

3. Did you expect the poem to end as it did? Why or why not? Can you see any connection between this and some of the hero stories you have read? Is Casey a hero? How does Thayer use the conventions of the hero story to write a comic poem?

4. What kind of a person was Casey? How do you know? Were you sorry for him? Why or why not?

5. You have discussed earlier the structure of narratives. Try to develop a diagram of the structure of this one. Where does the climax come? Is there only one climax? What about the reversals? How many reversals are there in the story? Where do they come?

Suggested Activities:

1. What is Mudville like? Draw a picture or write a description of it. Or draw a picture of the climactic swing in the Mudville park (don't forget the signs on the fences).

2. Pretend you are Casey. Tell how you felt when you struck out.

3. The umpire must have been uneasy at this stage of the game. Pretend you are the umpire who has gone home that evening and telling his wife about the game.

4. Write a story of the game as if you were a reporter for the local paper. Then try it as a reporter for the other team's home paper. How do the accounts differ?

Narrative
Teacher

Literature V-VI

Selection: "Ode to Billy Joe," by Bobbie Gentry, reprinted in The Charge of the Light Brigade and Other Story Poems. New York: Scholastic Book Service, 1969, page 106.

Purpose: To study techniques of characterization in a popular ballad.

Analysis: Your students will probably remember from their study of poetry that ballads always tell a story. Bobbie Gentry's ballad "Ode to Billy Joe" should be especially interesting to them because of its recent popularity and the controversy over whether it was a factual account. When asked just what it was that Billy Joe and the girl threw off the Tallahatchee Bridge, Miss Gentry reportedly said, "If I told you that, I would be arrested."

This may have been nothing more than publicity-gathering, but whether or not the story she tells is true, her ballad excellently exemplifies some of the narrative concepts we are trying to teach.

Like most ballads, this one achieves its effect by suggesting much more than it reveals, leaving the reader to fill in the information gaps. The speaker of the poem, apparently a young woman, reports events without much emotion, yet by the end we know that she has been more involved in the tragedy than anyone else. Characterization is thus the most important feature in this ballad--even more important than the mystery of what was thrown from the bridge--for it is in the reactions of the family to the tragedy of Billy Joe's death that the real story lies.

The ballad's narrative structure is quite simple. In a few deft strokes the opening stanza provides all the necessary exposition: the locale (Mississippi cotton country), the economic status of the family (they are small farmers who work their own land), and the central event, the drowning suicide of a local boy, Billy Joe McAllister. The complication develops through the next three stanzas, which reveal the relations various family members had to Billy Joe and their differing reactions to his death. The progress of the story in these stanzas depends on dinner-table conversation, but Miss Gentry skillfully uses this superficial device to suggest some subtle character relationships. The final stanza is a sort of recapitulation of the family's situation one year after Billy Joe's death.

Ask your students to point out places in the poem which reveal the attitudes of the various characters toward Billy Joe's death. You might suggest to them that a single detail--appetite--is the measuring stick that shows these reactions.

Papa is so little affected by the news that in the same sentence he can say the dead boy "never had a lick o' sense" and ask to have the biscuits passed. Brother, who was presumably a friend of Billy Joe's, seems to register little more than surprise ("you know, it don't seem right")--and he even eats a second piece of apple pie! Mama feels some sadness over the death (it is "a shame...anyhow"), but she too is more concerned with the meal in progress than with the tragedy she has just announced. She admonishes her daughter for not touching "a single bite" of food, and this

crucial contrast--the daughter can't eat anything, while the rest of the family "chows down" as usual--reveals that someone, at least, is deeply touched by Billy Joe's death. But perhaps Mama dimly perceives the cause of her daughter's lack of appetite, for she suggests what she (perhaps) hopes will be a consolation to the girl--she has invited a "nice young preacher" to dinner on Sunday.

The last two lines of the fourth stanza penetrate as far into the mystery as we are ever to get: from the mother's words, we deduce that the girl and Billy Joe had some kind of close relationship, that they shared some secret both wished to hide, and that the secret was frightening enough to cause Billy Joe to kill himself. People have often guessed the object thrown off the bridge to be the couple's illegitimate child--a not impossible conclusion, given the generally assumed social mores of the locale. However, there is nothing in the story either to confirm or deny such an interpretation--and in any case, one wonders how the girl could have kept a pregnancy hidden from her family. Don't urge this interpretation on your students. It may not even occur to them, but if it does, handle it as tactfully as you can. The most important point to make anyway is that the narrative fascinates us precisely because it doesn't reveal the mystery at the center. We can think of several plausible explanations, but the story gives no conclusive evidence for any of them.

The point (or "theme") Bobbie Gentry seems to make in this ballad is that people are indifferent to tragedy until it touches them personally. This interpretation is reinforced by the last stanza, which tells what happens to Mama when Papa dies. Now that she too has lost a loved one, she "doesn't seem to want to do much of anything." (Again, a pretty unemotional way to report what is apparently a great sorrow.)

The final stanza, and indeed the whole selection, conveys the stark, unsentimental view of life so often a feature of traditional ballads. Life simply goes on--some people get married, some are carried off by disease, some commemorate the past by dropping flowers over a bridge. In her symbolic act, the girl acknowledges a deep and unforgettable human bond. It is no accident that Miss Gentry titles this ballad an "ode" (signifying tribute or remembrance) to Billy Joe.

Suggested Questions:

1. Where is this story located? What details in the opening stanza reveal the location?

2. What is the most important event in the story? Does it actually happen in the poem?

3. How does the speaker of the poem react to the news of Billy Joe's death? How do you know the way she feels? Does she ever directly say so?

4. How do the other family members react to the death? Does the speaker of the poem tell us how they feel, or does she let them speak and act for themselves?

5. Using the evidence given in the poem, briefly describe each of the characters. Can we say that they reveal their personalities by the way they react to Billy Joe's suicide?

6. What kind of person do you think Billy Joe was? What details of his character are we given in the poem? Do you think he was very much like the "nice young preacher" Mama invited to dinner?

7. Do you have any ideas about what the girl and Billy Joe threw off the bridge? --(it could have been flowers, for instance. What would the flowers signify?)

8. Do we have any way of knowing why Billy Joe killed himself?

9. If you find this story enjoyable or fascinating, explain why.

Suggested Activities:

1. A natural--play Bobbie Gentry's recording of "Ode to Billy Joe" for the class.

2. Read aloud Edward Arlington Robinson's poem "Richard Cory," which also involves a suicide whose circumstances are shrouded in mystery. This could touch off an interesting discussion of the difference (in both poems) between what the world thought of the two men and what they really were inside. You might also consider the similarities and differences in the way each poem tells its story. Open the comparison up to the class and see what they can do.

ED 075850

Literature Curriculum, Grades V-VI

SIWARD DIGRI--

THE EARL OF NORTHUMBERLAND

A Tale of Old England

Developed under contract with the
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by

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The Knight on the Bridge

One summer day in 1042, an English beggar boy ran onto Westminster bridge in London and collapsed before he could reach the other side. Townspeople nearby saw him fall though no one moved to help him. For Tosti, the fierce Earl of Huntingdon, and

four of his men came riding in pursuit of the boy. They reined their horses to a stop at one end of the narrow bridge. Coldly, their eyes swept the crowd, daring anyone to step forward and interfere. No one stirred. The earl and his men moved onto the bridge and started toward the boy. When they had advanced to the center, a young knight suddenly stepped out of the crowd and stood over the boy.

Tosti pulled his horse to a stop and leaned forward in the saddle. Never had he seen such a knight. The man before him stood well over six feet with a bull neck, and shoulders as broad as an ox. A great battle axe hung from his belt.

"Stand aside!" cried Tosti.

The knight did not answer.

"The boy's a thief!" roared Tosti. "Now stand aside!"

Still the knight made no reply.

Angrily, Tosti drew his sword, put spurs to his horse and prepared to ride the young knight down.

Axe in hand, the knight waited. When the horse was nearly upon him, he leaped to one side, knocked away Tosti's blow and struck him from the saddle. The earl was dead before he struck the ground.

Badly shaken by the sudden death of their leader, Tosti's men tried to flee. But they had come too far forward on the narrow bridge. There was not enough room to turn around. Three of them charged straight ahead. Drawing their swords, they swung at the knight and, one by one, met the same fate that Tosti did. The fourth man managed to back his horse off the bridge. The crowd went for him and nearly pulled him down before he was able to escape.

The young knight picked up Tosti's sword.

"Take care of the boy," he said.

Then mounting Tosti's horse, he rode off to greet the king.

The Tournament

Edward, King of England, was having a tournament when the young knight arrived. A tilting field had been set up outside the castle walls and there, under the royal canopy, sat the king.

Hundreds ringed the field. Knights in bright armor waited their turn in the games. Squires were busy everywhere. Priests stood by with prayers.

Onto the field rode the young knight, straight up to the royal stall. The roar of the crowd died away. All eyes were on the stranger and the king.

"Well?" said Edward. "Who are you and what do you want?"

The knight pulled Tosti's sword from his belt and dropped it at the feet of the king.

The king did not move. He lowered his eyes to look and slowly brought them up again.

"Tosti's sword!" someone cried. And the news swept round the field.

"Who are you?" asked the king once more. "And why do you bring me this?"

"I am Siward of Denmark," replied the knight. "And I bring you Tosti's sword because, being dead, he cannot bring it himself."

The king frowned.

"Dead? The Earl of Huntingdon is dead?"

"Yes," said Siward. "On my way here, he tried to ride me down. I was forced to kill him along with three of his men."

Silently, the king studied the stranger for a time.

"You're far from Denmark," he said. "Why have you come all this way?"

"To serve England," was the reply.

A look of sour disbelief passed over the face of Eadwulf, the Earl of Northumberland, who sat at the king's right hand.

"What nonsense!" he cried. "This young beggar would have us believe that, alone and on foot, he killed not only one of the greatest knights in all England but three of his men as well!"

"Do you doubt me then?" asked Siward.

Eadwulf's cruel mouth slid into a smile.

"Dane," he said. "You lie."

Struggling to hold his temper, Siward's voice was calm.

"Had I a lance, we could test your charge on the tilting field," he said.

"Lances have I and plenty," said the earl. "My squire will bring you one."

The lance was brought. Eadwulf went to the far end of the field and sat while squires dressed him in armor. Siward rode to his place at the opposite end and waited. An old, one-eyed peddler spoke to him there.

"Young fool! Ride off, I say, and quickly!"

"And show myself a coward?" asked Siward.

"Would you rather show yourself dead? You're facing the Earl of Northumberland, lad!"

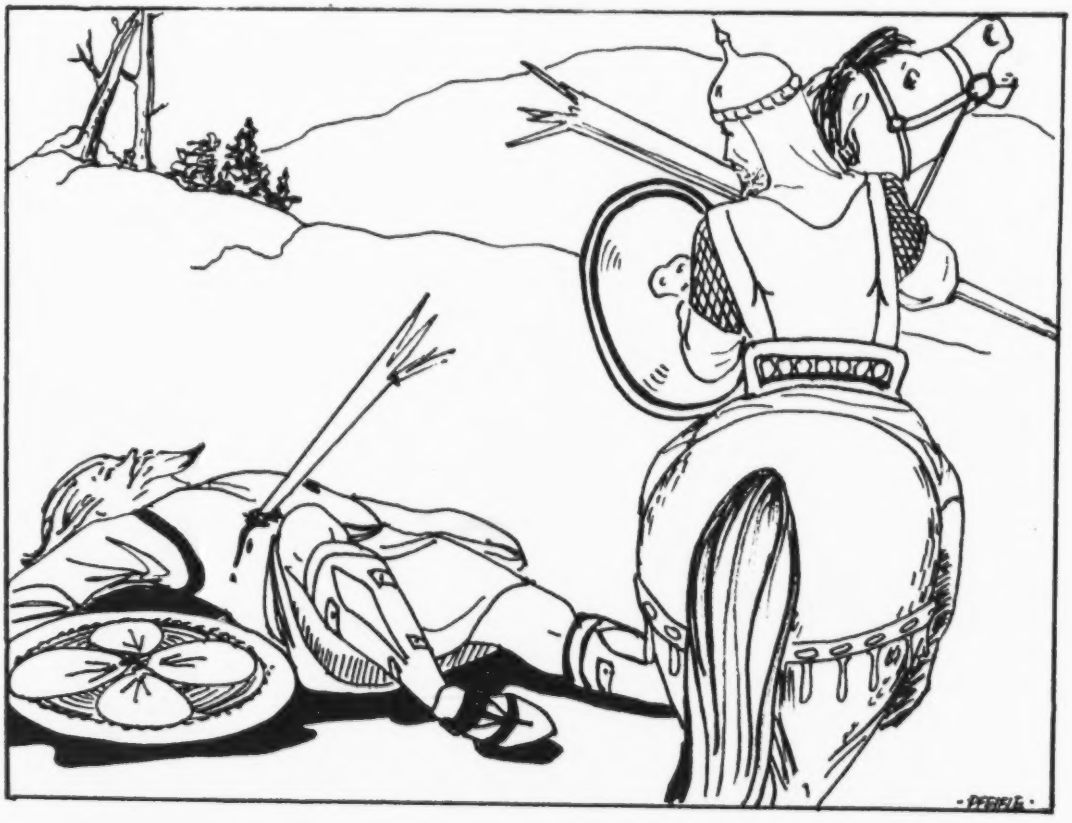
"Is he so fierce as all that?"

"Yes!" replied the peddler. "Flee! Flee! At once!"

But Siward stood his ground. Finally, the earl was astride his horse. Each man moved up to the starting line. A trumpet sounded. A roar went up from the crowd. Digging in their spurs, the two knights raced toward each other.

Through the slits of his visor, Siward watched the earl come on, low against the horse's back, shield high, lance pointed for the chest. Bracing himself in the stirrups, he took a firm grip on the lance and brought his own shield up.

With a sound like a thunderclap, they came together in the center of the field. Siward felt his horse sink to its haunches from the impact. The tip of the earl's lance struck a hard, glancing blow against his own upraised shield and slid away.



His lance, however, had been more deadly. Passing just inside the shield, it caught the earl full in the chest. There was the sound of splintering wood. The earl was pitched from his saddle and landed in a heap on the ground. The broken lance tip jutted from his dead body.

The crowd went silent.

Casting the broken lance aside, Siward rode back to the king.

"Will you accept my service now, Sire?" he asked. "Or must I go on breaking lances?"

The king was amazed.

"If your desire is to serve England, my son, England has need of you," he said. "Come. Sit beside me and enjoy the games while I think what best to do."

So Siward stayed on at London, attending the king and enjoying the games. When a week had passed, Edward made him Earl of Northumberland in place of Eadwulf, whom he had slain.

Northumberland

In the company of a dozen housecarls, Siward left London and headed north. A cold rain had begun to fall. The countryside was gray and dreary.

"It's a bad sign," one of the housecarls said. "Rain before a journey means trouble ahead."

Siward didn't argue with the thought. Northumberland was a wild and lawless province. Who could say what might happen there?

But the weather improved in a few days. Under a bright sun, Siward and his men crossed into Northumberland. As they moved through the summer hills and valleys, however, they began to feel uneasy.

Seldom did they meet anyone on the road. Those they did meet hurried by quickly, a look of fear in their eyes. Even in the towns people kept their distance and would not speak.

"I am the Earl of Northumberland," Siward would say. "Is this the road to York?"

Yet no one would stay to answer him.

"There's something very wrong here," Siward said. "The people are afraid."

"They're probably afraid of us," one of the housecarls replied.

Siward shook his head.

"No. It's not just us. These people have been afraid for a long time. Fear has become a habit with them."

Wondering at this, he continued on down the road.

When evening came, the company found itself in the heart of a dense forest. There, at a grassy clearing among the trees, Siward brought the column to a stop.

"We'll camp here," he said. "Make yourselves comfortable while there's still light to see by."

The housecarls soon had a fire going. The horses were hobbled and left to feed on the grass. Eight of the company went off to hunt and, within an hour, had returned with enough rabbit, quail, and other game to feed the company well.

After supper, they all gathered around the fire to swap stories. One of the older housecarls told about a poor knight who, having no horse, had ridden into battle on an ox. Everyone began to laugh and enjoy themselves. Everyone, that is, but Siward.

Out of the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of someone moving from tree to tree. He sat up and looked in that direction. There it was again except that this time he saw not one man but two, then three.

Quickly he looked in the opposite direction. There, too, dark figures hurried toward him, the fading light dancing on naked sword blades.

Siward tapped the man next to him with his foot. When the man turned to face him, he signaled him to be quiet then patted the handle of his axe. The housecarl was puzzled for a moment. Then suddenly he understood. He was being warned!

Without making a fuss, the housecarl turned, tapped the boot of the man next to him and gave the same warning as he'd been given. In this way, the signal was passed round the circle. No one made any sudden moves. The one who was speaking went on with his tale. Those who were listening laughed loud and long. But their hands were near their swords. Their eyes stole quick glances into the woods beyond. Their nerves screamed for action, but they waited.

When Siward could hear twigs snapping behind him, he sprang to his feet, axe in

hand, and sounded his battle cry. Whirling about, he found himself staring into the savage face of a Northumbrian outlaw. The man was powerfully built and heavy. A saber scar underlined his left eye, running from the tip of his ear to the bridge of his nose. In his right hand, he carried a double-edged battle sword.

With surprising speed, he suddenly raised the sword and brought it flashing down. Siward leaped to one side. He knocked the sword away with his axe and, in the same motion, put an end to the outlaw with a crushing blow to the ribs.

As the man went down, bandits poured from the woods, swords flying, and attacked Siward's little group.

"Stand your ground!" Siward cried.

In a fury, he flew at the thieves with such strength that five and six of them together were no match for him. The housecarls, seeing this, stood like a wall and met the charge head on. So ferocious was their defense that, before long, the bandits were forced to withdraw. In a panic, they fled into the dark safety of the forest, their number less by half than when they came.

One of the housecarls was also killed. Another was gravely wounded.

Siward put his axe away. Ordering his men to rest, he stood guard through the night. When morning came, he buried his dead, bound up the wounded as best he could, and continued on to York from where he would rule the land.

York

Two days later, Siward arrived at York. His men were exhausted. Many had been wounded but none complained.

Yet, if Siward was hoping for a rest, he was sadly disappointed. No one at the castle would believe that Eadwulf had been killed.

Siward unrolled a large parchment and held it up to them.

"See for yourself," he said. "Here is the royal order. Below that you'll surely recognize the seal of His Royal Highness, Edward the Confessor, King of England."

The castle attendants laughed.

"The King of England, is it! How good of him to write us. Still, he's such a long way off. Indeed, we'd forgotten all about him."

Siward grew angry.

"Don't play with me!" he cried. "You're English subjects and will serve the king, even as I shall. And with honor!"

A man called Markstad came forward in ruffles and silk. Hands behind his back, he slowly walked around Siward and his men.

"My word!" he exclaimed. "What an odor! I'm afraid you've been sleeping with horses."

The attendants thought this very funny.

"Well, no matter," Markstad went on. "You've come from far away. Still, I find it hard to believe that even King Edward would make an earl of such a man as you. If you'll be so good as to let me read the order, however, perhaps I can decide for myself."

Taking the parchment from Siward, he unrolled it and began to read. Slowly, he moved to a table then, all at once, threw the parchment down.

"So, my large friend," he said. "You seem to have won the friendship of the king. Yet London is far from here and the king's aid hard to come by. Meanwhile, we have ways of settling things."

He waved his hand and the castle guard closed about Siward's little band. The housecarls reached for their swords but Siward warned them to be calm.

Without a word, he walked up to the captain of the guard and, with a single, thunderous blow of his fist, sent him sprawling.

Thoroughly surprised, no one moved or spoke. For a long moment there was no sound except the captain's metal helmet rolling round the floor.

Slowly, Siward made his way along the circle of the guard.

"Those who will not serve me, say so now and go your way," he said.

No one offered to leave. When he had completed his circle, Siward spoke again.

"Since you've elected to stay, I welcome you. In the name of King Edward, I offer you the comfort and protection of this house. Yet, should there be any among you, who, in his secret heart, would serve me false, beware. Death will be your reward."

He looked hard at Markstad for a moment. Then, as it was the dinner hour, he had himself shown into the dining hall.

There he took the place of honor at the head table and seated his housecarls to either side.

The meal was hearty and all present ate their fill. Afterward, yawning and stretching for all to see, Siward went to his room and, taking off his armor, lay down to sleep.

Sometime in the night, the evil Markstad made his way to Siward's room. Creeping to the bed, he raised his dagger high and was just bringing it down when, suddenly, out of darkness, Siward's great axe cut him down. From that night on, the new earl slept in peace.

The Vikings

n the months and years that followed, Siward brought order to Northumbria. He declared war on outlaws. Disguised as a merchant, he patrolled the roads with a mounted guard not far behind. When he was attacked, as he often was, he flew at the bandits with his axe, decreasing their numbers stroke by stroke while the guard came riding up. Afterwardit was open court under the nearest tree. Anyone found guilty was hung from a handy limb. Before long, the roads were safe again.

Courts were set up and judges appointed to run them. Feuds were banned. Churches were built and the people required to attend them.

When everything was under control, Siward returned to London to tell the king what had been done. While there, he received word that a powerful Viking force had sailed up the Humber and was advancing on York.

Though it was well past midnight, he awakened the king and gave him the news. A look of grave concern came into Edward's eyes.

"The Vikings again! What do you think we should do?"

"Fight!" cried Siward. "What else?"

"Fight? How? York is a week's ride from here. You'd never get there in time. Even if you did, what difference would it make? You'd need men."

"How many men can you raise before dawn?" asked Siward.

The king shrugged.

"Three or four hundred at the most. I doubt that they'd be much good if the Viking force is as large as you say."

"We Northumbrians are not unskilled in war," replied Siward. "My men will fight well. I ask only for whatever aid you can give at the moment."

Edward shook his head. "They're after the cathedral," he said. "You know that. They'll take the valuables and burn

the town. No one can avoid that now. Why throw your life away? Stay and prepare a proper defense in case they decide to turn south."

Siward frowned.

"I regret, Sire, that in this matter, we cannot agree. My place is at York. I leave at dawn."

True to his word, Siward rode out of London at first light with three hundred English knights at his back. Stopping only to rest the horses, he pressed on, day and night, and arrived at the River Humber in three days.

There he found a hundred Viking ships riding at anchor and protected by a light guard. The main body had moved on toward York, leaving in its wake a countryside awash with fire and blood. No home, village, or field was spared the torch; no creature was left alive.

When he saw this, Siward dismounted and, kneeling on a wooded knoll, held up his great axe.

"From this day on, I shall not rest from war while there is breath in me and a Viking lives in England," he said.

Then mounting up, he led his knights against the Viking guard. Driving up the beach from the south, he flew at the guard like a demon. The Vikings fought back savagely but they were taken by surprise. Days of idleness and drinking had made them careless, a mistake they paid for with their lives.

Siward paused long enough to burn the ships closest in. Then he took his fight to York. There he found two thousand or more Vikings advancing on the castle. Brave Northumbrian knights, outnumbered two to one, fought them every step of the way.

Siward slammed into the enemy line from the rear, his battle cry ringing above the clash of steel. Again and again his mighty axe shot out, laying waste the enemy on all sides. A lance ripped a gash in his thigh. A sword blow tore away his chain mail, wounding him in the chest. His horse was killed beneath him and still he fought on. So vicious was his charge and the blow of his axe that Viking warriors, long used to battle, were awed and fearful fighting him.

With Siward and his knights at their back, the Vikings were forced to turn. Northumbrian archers saw their chance and filled the sky with arrows.

The Vikings fought with a terrible fearlessness. Time and time again English knights felt the awful hammer blows of the Viking axe. Few who did lived to tell about it.

At last, however, Northumbrian arrows began to tell. The Viking advance was stopped.

Urging the English on, Siward pressed in even harder. The line waved back and forth for a time, then broke. The Vikings began to retreat.

On the horse of a fallen knight, Siward gave chase. English knights, some hundred or so, did likewise. Northumbrian soldiers followed on foot.

Fighting all the way, the Vikings came at last to the sea. Finding their ships burned or too far out, they plunged into the waves. Those who were able swam to the nearest ship. Those who were not able drowned.

In this way, twenty or so Viking ships managed to escape. The rest Siward burned on the beaches.

Thus it was that the Vikings were driven from Northumbria. When the last sail disappeared over the horizon, Siward put his axe away. Turning his horse toward York, he led the triumphant march home. His tattered army fell in behind, bearing their wounded and their dead. And in the heart of each of them there burned something new--a fierce pride in being English; in being Northumbrian; in being Siward's men.

"Long live Siward!" they cried. "Siward Digri--the mighty!"

Ursa

To celerate their victory over the Vikings, Siward held a tournament. Knights came, as always, to try their luck on the tilting field. Minstrels came seeking new coins. Ladies in fine dresses and gentlemen in their best strutted birdlike through the grounds. Everywhere was feasting, music, and the games.

On the second night, Siward sat listening to a young troubadour recite battle tales when his eye came to rest on Ursa, daughter of the Earl of Westmoreland. Her auburn hair shone in the soft torch light. Softly green and laughing, her eyes flashed like two happy thoughts. When the poet was through, Siward invited the earl and his daughter to share a glass of wine.

Seated at the table, the men talked idly of weapons and war though Siward found the subject hard to follow. Ursa, fair and smiling, kept breaking into his thoughts.

At last, the earl excused himself and went to settle a forgotten piece of business. Ursa stayed behind and smiled a lot while Siward struggled for something to say. After a few awkward moments, she had him talking as smoothly as could be expected.

Late in the evening, she rose to leave.

"What!" cried Siward. "Going already!"

"Yes. With your permission, of course. Perhaps you'll speak with me again before the tournament ends."

She held out her hand to him. And he, rising awkwardly and much too quick, knocked over his wine reaching for it.

"Certainly!" he said. "Surely! Nothing could please me more!"

With a nod and a curtsy, she was gone. And standing there in silver mail, wine dripping on his boots, the greatest warrior in all England thought his heart would burst.

The next day, and for three days thereafter, he looked for her in vain. She was not at the games or shopping in the stalls. She wasn't among the young ladies of the court who gathered in little groups to giggle in the sun.

He tramped the castle grounds until his legs ached. He even searched the chapel and once rode into the village for a quick look round.

Fellow knights, missing him at the games, asked if he was feeling well.

"Of course!" he roared. "Is it so odd that I mingle with my guests instead of gawking like a chicken at the games?"

"Why no," said his friends. "That's not odd at all. Not in the least."

Siward thought that he could hear them laughing as they walked away. Yet, what could he do?

On the final evening of the tournament, he sat at his place and watched a toothless drifter juggle eggs. He was feeling very low. The games were at an end. The guests would soon be gone. No more the clatter of armor and the gay minstrel's song. Nothing lay ahead but work, boredom, and a loneliness impossible to bear. Saying goodnight to those near him, he was about to leave when out the corner of his eye, whom should he see but Ursa.

Now his spirit soared! A broad smile swept his face and his own massive frame seemed to dance on air.

He rose from his chair and hurried down the long table toward the place where she was seated. A group of waiters carrying trenchers of meat held him back for a time. A crowd of guests delayed him further still. When, at last, he arrived at the place where Ursa sat, she was gone.

"Sire," said he to her father, "pray tell me where she's gone."

The older man looked puzzled.

"Who are you talking about?"

"Why Ursa, of course," said Siward.

The Earl of Westmoreland laughed.

"Oh, it's that one, is it? Well, I can't be sure but I think she's in the garden."

Siward rushed through the hall and into the garden beyond. There he found Ursa seated on a bench. However, she was not alone. A handsome, young knight was with her. This slowed Siward down a bit though he did not turn back. Loudly clearing his throat, he approached the bench. The young knight recognized his host, stood and bowed.

"Good evening, my lord," said he.

Siward cleared his throat a second time.

"Good evening," he replied. "Unfortunately, the Earl of Westmoreland is not feeling well and has gone to his bed."

"Papa Harold?" said Ursa. "Why, I only just left him."

"The attack was quite sudden, I'm afraid," said Siward.

"What is it?" asked the knight. "What's the matter?"

"Something to do with his breathing," Siward answered. "He asked that you attend him as soon as you possibly can."

"I?" said the knight.

"Alsi?" said Ursa. "He asked that Alsi come?"

Siward nodded very seriously.

"Yes, Alsi. That's the very name."

Excusing himself, Alsi hurried off. Ursa moved to follow but Siward took her arm.

"There's nothing you can do but wait," he said. "Meanwhile, listen to what I've come to say."

When Alsi returned somewhat later, a bit angry at finding the earl in perfect health, Siward had convinced Ursa that she should marry him.

"I do apologize for having tricked your young man," said Siward as Alsi stomped away.

Ursa fluttered her pretty lashes and accepted the apology. It wasn't until after the wedding that she confessed.

"Oh!" she laughed. "Didn't you know? Alsi is my cousin. Were you thinking something else?"

Osborn Bole-Ax

At summer's end, Siward and Ursa were married in a ceremony of such beauty that Northumbrians could speak of nothing else for months. King Edward himself attended, his royal standard flying from the lances of a hundred knights.

Siward could not have been more handsome. In polished silver mail, he moved to the altar like a god. Ursa wore white lace and was so lovely that the vision of her lingered in the dreams of many young men long after the wedding was through.

Two years later, she gave birth to a son. He was a large baby, solid and strong. Siward called him Osborn; Osborn Bole-Ax--timber axe.

Ursa laughed.

"It seems like a heavy name," she said. "Still, he'll bear it if he must."

Osborn grew quickly from a mere infant, waddling after Ursa through the castle and the grounds to a stout lad of twelve, riding with his father through Northumbrian fields and towns.

Siward introduced him early to the axe, lance, sword, and mace. Each he learned to handle well.

They hunted together deep in the forest wilds. There, seated round a campfire, Siward shared his favorite battle tales. Osborn, staring into the fire, watched the flames make Viking beards and the angry face of war.

One night, the boy was awakened by the roar of a great wind moaning through the trees. The fire danced wildly on the night. Horses screamed and reared.

"Father! Father!" he cried.

Suddenly Siward's two strong arms enclosed the boy, holding him safe and warm.

When the wind died away, Osborn went back to sleep. But Siward lay awake. A heavy dread settled over him and, in the morning, he decided to go home.

He and Osborn, riding hard, arrived at York about an hour after dark. From the fields they could see the old, familiar castle-blaze of light. Yet all was still and joyless. Something had gone wrong.

Spurring on his horse, Siward flew to the castle, raced across the moat, and reined to a stop before the hall. Vaulting from the saddle, he ran inside. There, in front of a fire on the great main hearth, he found Ursa stretched on a makeshift bed.

"Ursa!" he cried. "Ursa!"

But Ursa, child of summer and laughing eyes, did not wake to him. Indeed, could not again forever.

"'Twas the wind," one of the attendants explained. "Blowing up suddenly, it spooked her horse, throwing her among the rocks. We could not save her."

Osborn, who had followed, began to sob. Though he struggled mightily to hold his grief, tears came in spite of him. One of the housecarls put an arm around his shoulders and led him gently away.

Siward smoothed a lock from Ursa's lovely face. Then, kneeling down, he took her hand.

"Ursa," he whispered. "I love you. I cannot bear to say goodbye. May God's brightest angels lead thee home to rest."

And rising, he left the castle and walked into a world suddenly untuned by sorrow and despair.

The Earl of Strathclyde Pays a Call

With the death of Ursa, a cloud descended on Siward that did not lift again in years. He moved into a small room high in the main keep. There he slept and ate and prowled away the hours all alone.

By day, he lost himself in work. He built walls. He laid out new fields to be cleared and planted. He tended animals, finding in them some little peace.

Evenings he went over the accounts, working to exhaust himself in order that sleep, being stronger, might blot out thoughts of Ursa for a while.

Daily he planned to leave Northumbria. He even thought of returning to Denmark, his own boyhood home. Or perhaps he'd go south to see what lay beyond England there.

Yet, scheme and plan as he would, he did not go. For there was Osborn Bole-Ax to consider. To one day rule Northumbria was his due.

So Siward stayed. And later, when time had dulled the ache a bit, he knew that he was right.

For Osborn was a worthy son. In his eighteenth year he stood nearly as tall as his father. Strong and quick, no knight in England, save Siward himself, could equal him in horsemanship or arms.

And he was handsome. The young ladies of the court had all set their caps for him. Even some of the older ones, a bit plain perhaps and unwed, did what they could to snare him.

Several dukes and earls had already approached Siward, hoping that a clever bargain might swing the lad their way. Even the Earl of Strathclyde showed up one day with his daughter, Ethelfled, bulging the seams of a new green gown and giggling like a nitwit.

"My Ethelfled has been feeling a bit low," said the earl. "The poor, wee lamb! Cooped up all winter in that stuffy old castle! But it's spring now and I've brought her here to meet your Osborn. And see--already she's begun to smile."

Ethelfled, in fact, began to giggle. Without warning, she reached over and pinched Osborn on the arm. Completely surprised, he blushed. This made Ethelfled giggle even harder. She threw her arms around her frail, old father's neck and hugged him very hard.

"Oh, see this now!" gasped the earl. "She likes your boy! Why, she's trembling like a butterfly!"

For the next three minutes, the old earl dangled helplessly in the iron embrace of his last unmarried daughter. She was trembling all right. Every inch of her shook. Her hair danced in long, golden ringlets every time she moved her head.

She stared at Osborn and he stared back at her, completely flabbergasted.

"Come now," said Siward, finally. "This is fine. Yet no doubt you're tired and will want to rest." He waved to one of the housecarls. "Gulen will show you to your rooms."

When the earl and his daughter had gone off with Gulen, Osborn spoke.

"Really, father. Do you think it wise to have guests just now? There's so much to do. Planting season is upon us. The new stable is only half completed. . ."

"Why, Osborn," said Siward. "It almost sounds as if you didn't want the earl to stay."

Osborn folded his arms and stared at the floor.

"Oh, the earl's all right, I guess. It's his daughter that bothers me. All that giggling and bouncing around. . ."

"Nevertheless, she is your guest," replied Siward. "You'll have to entertain her."

Seeing that his father would not change his mind, Osborn left the castle and went into the fields. There, among the farmers, he would have time to think.

"Ethelfled must go!" he told himself. "But how?"

A plan was needed. Yet nothing came to mind. A feeling of helplessness came over the young knight. In a flash of anger, he picked up a rock and threw it as far as he could.

"Of all the luck!" he cried. "She'll probably be here all summer!"

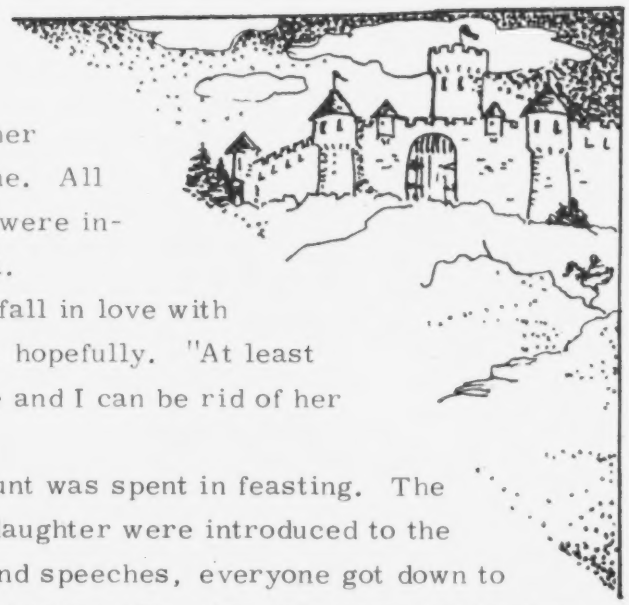
Three weeks later, Ethelfled was still around. She followed Osborn everywhere. Her father was delighted.

"I've never seen Ethelfled more healthy," he said to Siward one day. "Her cheeks are rosy. Her appetite's strong. And she thoroughly enjoys that boy of yours. You know, it might not be a bad thing at all if they should decide to marry."

"Oh?" said Siward. Through a window he saw Osborn going out the gate with Ethelfled on his arm. She was giggling and pulling at him while he marched stiffly on.

In that moment, a weight was suddenly lifted from Siward's chest. For the first time in years, he smiled.

Meanwhile, Osborn was getting thinner. He ate very little and couldn't sleep. Ethelfled was wearing him down. She waited for him at breakfast and hounded him until dark. All day long, she pulled and poked and pinched him. There wasn't much



else she could do. She was too fat to be active and too dull for conversation.

Siward held a hunt in her honor around the first of June. All the nobles for miles around were invited. Osborn liked the idea.

"Maybe someone will fall in love with her or vice versa," he said, hopefully. "At least there'll be other people here and I can be rid of her for a while."

The night before the hunt was spent in feasting. The Earl of Strathclyde and his daughter were introduced to the crowd. After many toasts and speeches, everyone got down to serious eating. When all had eaten, the minstrels came with songs and stories to entertain.

Unfortunately for Osborn, the evening was a total waste. Ethelfled went for him at the very beginning and stayed with him all evening. No other young man ever got close to her. Osborn took some of his oldest friends aside and begged them to help him out. But, alas, even they let him down. Worse yet, the girls he did admire would have nothing to do with him.

So, for most of the evening, he herded Ethelfled around the room, his spirits dropping lower and lower. At last, a brilliant thought occurred to him. He would tire her out.

Some of the younger guests had taken a few minstrels aside to play peasant dances. Going there with Ethelfled, Osborn insisted on dancing every dance. Round and round he whirled while Ethelfled giggled and the old earl beamed.

But Ethelfled was stronger than he knew. She huffed and she puffed but she didn't cave in. It wasn't until the evening was nearly over that she finally gave up and went to bed.

Osborn was so exhausted that soon afterward, he did likewise.

The Hunt

On the following morning, Ethelfled slept late. She awoke in mid-morning, had a hearty breakfast, then joined the party at the stables.

Osborn was also there but in no mood for play. Tired as he had been, he tossed and turned all night. He had arisen with the sun to attend to the hunt. There were spears and lances for the men as well as the more spirited horses. They would be after boar. The ladies, of course, were given gentle mounts.

"Good morning, Osborn!" cried Ethelfled, rushing up. "Good, good, bright, bright morning!"

She went for him but he stepped quickly to the other side of a horse.

"Choose your mount!" he said, coldly.

Squealing with excitement, she covered her eyes, spun around twice and pointed.

"There!" she said. "I'll have that one!"

Osborn was astounded.

"Glinda?" he said. "She's the oldest mare in the stable. Much too old for hunting."

Ethelfled stamped her foot.

"You said that I could choose!" she cried. "Well, I did choose. I want Glinda!"

Then she folded her arms, tossed her head and faced the other way.

"I'll shake her!" thought Osborn. "I'll shake her and shake her and shake her!"

But, of course, he didn't.

Not with his father and the Earl of Strathclyde looking on.

Still, he didn't tell her about Glinda either. Glinda was old and tired. Sometimes, when she felt that she had been ridden enough, she would simply lie down. Regardless of where she was or who was riding her, she would drop her head and then her rump and lie over on one side. All the men in the kingdom couldn't get her going again until she was rested.

"Very well," said Osborn. "If you insist, Glinda will be your mount."

Ethelfled turned back to face him and smiled as though she had won a great victory.

Osborn saddled Glinda and led the animal out to where Ethelfled was standing on a heavy wooden stool. She mounted sidesaddle, settling like some huge bird in a nest of lace and petticoats.

When everything was ready, Osborn gave the signal and the hunt got under way.

Siward and the Earl of Strathclyde rode at the head of the short column. Osborn, being in charge of the hunt, came next. Behind him rode the men who, in turn, were followed by the women. Game keepers and the ladies' falconers brought up the rear.

The party moved across the fields and into the forest. Siward, like all knights, was eager for the hunt. He kept his lance at the ready and scanned the brush ahead. Presently, a large, ugly boar emerged from a thicket in front of him. Lowering his lance, he gave chase. Flying at a near gallop through the trees, he had soon overtaken the boar and brought it down.

He looked back then to see how the others were doing and saw his guest, the Earl of Strathclyde, having a terrible time.

In the first place, he was much too old and frail to really handle a spear anymore. It was forever getting entangled in the branches and bushes as he went along.

In the second place, he couldn't manage the horse. He was all over the forest, thrashing about in the underbrush and trees. The boar he was after couldn't have had an easier time. It zigged a little and zagged a little, then disappeared into a clump of vines not far from where Siward was.

Cursing and puffing, the earl came riding up.

"I can see that you've made your kill," he said. "My congratulations. I came within a hair of bagging one myself. However, this horse is not behaving well. Perhaps he's tired."

"How unfortunate," Siward replied. "Would you care to change mounts?"

The earl shook his head.

"No! No! I'll stay with this one and see it safely home."

Siward nodded as pleasantly as he could. Inside, though, he was disappointed. He would have to give up the hunt.

All at once, the earl held up his hand.

"Listen!" he said.

The sound of a very angry voice rang out through the trees.

"Ethelfled!" the earl exclaimed.

Turning round, the two men followed the sound to a small forest meadow. There a slough wound its way slowly toward the river farther on. Osborn was on the far bank, waiting, astride his mount, for Ethelfled and three game bearers to cross over.

But Ethelfled was in a rage. The sun was baking hot. She was stiff and sore from riding. And, worst of all, Glinda had refused to cross the slough. She had come right down to the water's edge but would go no farther.

Osborn came back and recrossed the slough, thinking that Glinda might follow. However, she didn't. The game bearers stroked, petted and pushed her. Still nothing.

Frustrated and angry, Ethelfled began to pound the animal with her fists.

"You wretched, ugly beast! You stupid brute! You awful creature!"

Glinda tossed her head and locked her knees. She looked rather serious about the eyes.

Siward and the earl came riding up just as Ethelfled, losing all patience, began to kick and squirm. When Glinda still refused to move, Ethelfled reached for the whip.

Osborn tried to warn her.

"Not the whip!" he cried. "Don't use the whip!"

But Ethelfled was too angry. Down came the whip. Down went Glinda's head as she dropped forward to her

knees. Ethelfled was pitched headlong into the slough.

There was a moment of stunned silence. Glinda lowered her rump, rolled over on her side in the cool mud and gazed out blissfully at Ethelfled coughing and snorting among the cattails, frogs, and water grass.

Osborn was the first to laugh. Every tired and anxious nerve in him suddenly relaxed. Completely limp, he slid from the saddle, clung to the neck of his horse and laughed until tears rolled down his face.

The game bearers were next. They held their sides and pointed out to Ethelfled sitting waist deep in the slough.

Siward really tried to hold himself in. He bit his lip. He frowned. He looked the other way. But it was all too funny. Before long he was roaring as bad as the worst of them.

The Earl of Strathclyde, however, didn't think it was funny. He glared at Siward.

"This is an outrage! If I were a younger man and we were not good friends, Strathclyde troops would tear your castle down!"

Dismounting, he waded into the slough and pulled his daughter out. Together they started back toward the castle on foot.

"Get away! Get away!" cried the earl when Siward tried to help.

Soaked and bawling, Ethelfled refused to be comforted. She lifted her mud-caked skirts and marched away, with her father hurrying along at her side.

The next morning, the Earl of Strathclyde came to say goodbye.

"Leaving so soon?" asked Siward.

"Yes," replied the earl. "I've been gone too long already."

Then without once mentioning the hunt, he thanked Siward for his hospitality and left.

Side by side from an upper window, Siward and Osborn watched the party leave along the road.

"I'm sorry about yesterday," said Osborn. "I didn't behave very well."

"Neither did I," replied his father.

"Do you think the old boy was really hurt?"

Siward smiled.

"I've known him a long time," he said. "He'll get over it. So will she. In time, they'll see the humor in it. They'll laugh about yesterday. But for now, how about something to eat?"

Together they went down to the dining hall and enjoyed the merriest breakfast two men ever had.

A Lone Rider

A new spirit ripened with the grain in Northumbria that year. Gone was the sadness that followed Ursa's death. Siward came down from the keep and moved into his old rooms again, leaving his memories to take their proper place in his mind.

Osborn was as frisky as a colt. He took up lance and shield once more and spent the sunny days unhorsing knights at tournament. Siward often went along and cheered from the sidelines, though in this his time was largely wasted. Osborn seldom needed cheering. On one occasion, a steel-tipped lance pierced both shield and armor and laid his right shoulder open to the bone. Still, the wound healed neatly and, though he suffered a fevered night or two, in a matter of weeks he was able to tilt again.

When not at tournament or hunting in the wild, Siward took pleasure in training Osborn to rule. He taught him to hold court and how to judge. He taught him to farm, rotating the crops for a better yield. Together they roamed Northumbria, visiting the people of the hamlets and towns.

"See the taller one there?" whispered some villagers at the well. "He's the Earl Siward. The one who drove the Vikings out."

"Who's the blond one with him?"

"That's the boy, Osborn. They say he's as tough as his father. I hope that's true for it makes us doubly safe. When Siward goes we'll have a spare."

Northumbrians felt secure. There had been no war. No neighboring duke or earl dared attack them, burning their fields and homes. The Vikings had not come again. The weather was good. The sun, shining brightly day by day, coaxed the grain to fullness and loaded the barns at harvest time.

Then one evening in mid-summer, Siward and Osborn had just finished supper when the housecarls brought in a lone rider. His cloak was torn and muddy. On his forehead he showed a bad wound that had been tied over with a rag. Dark circles ringed his eyes.

Helping him to a chair, the housecarls stepped aside as Siward came up.

"Call the physician," he said.

Looking more closely, he found the stranger to be quite young. His clothing and his manners showed that this was no ordinary rider but one of noble rank.

"Who are you?" asked Siward.

The young man struggled to rise, then fell back.

"I am Malcolm, Prince of Scotland," he said. "Have I the honor of addressing the Earl of Northumberland?"

"You have," Siward replied.

The prince heaved a sigh and laid his head against the chair.

"I have come to tell you that my father, Duncan, King of Scotland, has been murdered."

Stunned by the news, Siward stared into the face of the prince.

"Murdered?"

The prince nodded.

"Yes. Cut to death as he lay sleeping."

"But who would do this?"

"Macbeth," the prince replied. "My father's cousin. He's determined to be king if he has to murder all Scotland to do it!"

Coming forward too quickly in his anger, the prince felt his thoughts swimming and would have fainted from the chair had not Siward caught him.

"Easy, lad," said the earl. "Rest yourself a bit. The doctor's on his way."

"There'll be rest enough for me when Macbeth has breathed his last," said the prince. "Meanwhile, I've come for help. What say you? Will you lead the army against Macbeth and restore the throne to me?"

"You needn't ask," said Siward. "Of course I will. Perhaps you know that Duncan was a brother to my wife. But rest now. Recover your strength. There'll be time enough for fighting."

The physician hurried into the room, his long nightshirt trailing on the floor.

"One thing more," said the prince. "Has Macduff come before me?"

"Macduff?" asked Siward. "I don't know the name."

"He's a nobleman of Scotland," said the prince. "He stood with me against Macbeth. Because of that, the madman cut his family down."

"What has become of him?" asked Osborn.

"I don't know," replied Malcolm. "We fled the uplands together and were separated in the night. Yet look for him along the road. He's wounded and will be slow."

The doctor examined the prince and put him to bed.

Siward organized a search party and sent it blazing into the night, torches high. Calling his fastest rider, he sent the news of Duncan's murder flying to the king at London.

"Tell him that we need troops," he said, as the rider mounted up. "As many as he can spare."

At last, he turned to Osborn.

"Have you tired of tournaments, my boy?" he asked. "Then bid farewell to games. Here is war if you will have it."

"Have it, father?" said Osborn. "But of course I will. And gladly!"

Siward looked at his son in silence for a time.

"Spoken as I would have you speak," he said at last. "But now to sleep. Tomorrow will need our wits."

Later that night Macduff was found, weak though still astride his mount. He was taken to the castle and cared for in a room not far from Malcolm.

Dunsinane

Three weeks later, Siward led an army of five thousand Englishmen north along the road to Scotland. At his right hand rode Osborn, a maiden's scarf flying from his lance. On his left rode Malcolm and then Macduff.

At the same time an English fleet of two hundred ships, carrying supplies and five thousand troops, sailed out of Whitby bound for Perth.

Siward turned and looked at the long column marching at his back. The mounted knights were up front; the foot soldiers farther back. He recalled with pride that not so many years before he was a stranger in this land with no one to serve him save a handful of housecarls far from home. Now he led an army of Englishmen, well trained and eager for the test ahead.

Turning to Osborn, he spoke.

"Macbeth has taken Scotland. Let's see if he can keep it."

For eight days, Siward and his army rode deep into Scotland. The countryside was quiet and beautiful. The sun shone. Birds sang. Cool sea breezes swept the long English line, fluttering the banners on the steel lance points. But Macbeth's army was nowhere to be seen. Except for an English mealtime brawl, there was no fighting at all.

Osborn and his fellow knights began to grumble.

"Some war this is!" they'd say. "You'd think we'd come on a picnic."

"Patience," replied Siward. "I know the Scots. They'll give you all the fight you want--and then some."

On the morning of the ninth day, the English overland forces joined the seaborne troops at Perth. Moving ever northward, the combined forces passed into the rolling uplands of the Sidlaw Hills

and there, at a place called Birnam Wood, Siward brought his army to a halt.

In the distance, the ancient fortress of Dunsinane sat perched atop Dunsinane Hill. From his scouts Siward learned that a large army of Scots under Macbeth was gathered there.

"Will he attack us on the plain?" he asked Macduff.

Macduff shook his head.

"No. Macbeth's a madman but he's no fool. He'll know that he's outnumbered."

"Can we starve him out?"

"I doubt it. He's had time to prepare. There's probably enough food up there to feed his army for a year."

Siward was quiet for a time, lost in thought. At last he turned to his officers and spoke.

"We'll take the castle then. There's no other way. Have each man cut a large limb and carry it before him as we advance. If Macbeth doesn't know we're here, we may at least surprise him."

The word has passed and soon the boughs of Birnam Wood marched row on row toward Dunsinane.

High on the fortress walls, a sentry saw them coming though he could scarcely believe his eyes. Dashing inside, he reported at once to Macbeth.

"The English, Sire! They're at our very door!"

"What are you talking about?" roared Macbeth.

"Malcolm has brought the English! I've seen his banner on the field below!"

Macbeth grew pale though his courage did not fail him.

"So the English have come at last. And what of it? Nothing can hurt us here. This is a charmed spot. The wisemen have said so many times. 'Macbeth will never be beaten until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane.' Now tell me, have you ever seen a forest moving?"

"But that's exactly what I've come to say!" cried the sentry. "At this very moment, Birnam Wood is marching here in the arms of Englishmen!"

Macbeth's face went blank. Running to the wall, he himself saw the forest branches advancing on the field.

"Wretched fate!" he cried. "Of all the terrors my life has seen, this is the most insane! Birnam Wood has come to Dunsinane. Who can doubt it? Therefore, sound the alarm! Let our trumpets hail the end! We'll die, at least, with armor on!"

From his place at the head of the column, Siward's eyes swept the fortress walls. He thought he saw something move there, a banner perhaps, waving briefly in the air. Then suddenly, to the blare of trumpets, an army of Scottish knights poured from the base of Dunsinane Hill to attack the English on three sides.

Rising in his stirrups, Siward gave the order to cast the boughs away. Then dropping his visor and lowering his lance, he sprang forth to meet the charge.

Osborn, his heart racing, rode beside him. Malcolm, farther to the right and rear, led the defense on that flank while Macduff, broad and solid, brought his knights up on the left.

Rushing headlong over a broad plain, the two armies came together in a ringing clash of steel. Lances snapped. Men and horses screamed in pain. Knights, pitched from their horses, struggled to rise against the crushing weight of armor. Some did, only to be brought low again by a killing broadsword blow. Some did not and were trampled in the mad press of horses and men.

Siward's lance pierced the stomach of a burly knight and flung him to the ground. Then, taking up his axe, he raged against the Scots.

Osborn's lance also found its mark. Near the moment of impact, his opponent let his shield slip too far down, exposing his chest for an instant. But an instant was all that Osborn needed. With a flick of his wrist, he aimed his lance at the fatal spot and rammed it home. The Scot was ripped from the saddle, the weight of his body tearing the lance from Osborn's grip.

Drawing his sword, Osborn moved forward, shield high, raining blows to left and right. A Scottish blade slashed a deep wound in his thigh. The spiked head of a chained mace tore his shield away, wrenching his arm in the socket. His horse gave way beneath him. On foot then, he fought on, proud and unyielding, with all the savage strength born in him.

The Scots drove in hard at the English flanks. Yard by yard, they closed behind the Northumbrian knights, separating them from the foot soldiers farther back.

Seeing that he was about to be cut off, Siward swung free and, coming to Malcolm's aid, stopped the advance on the the right flank. On the left, stout Macduff and his knights held the greater Scottish force long enough for the foot soldiers to come up in support.

For hours the battle raged, inching first one way and then the other. Finally Siward broke through the line. Englishmen poured through after him, turning back the Scots to either side.

On the left flank, as the battle was widning down, Macduff traded blows with a Scot and soon brought him down. Looking about then, whom should he see but Macbeth himself, not ten yards off and faced the other way.

Macduff rushed to where he stood, anger and black revenge pounding like a hammer in his brain.

"Turn, you devil!" he cried.

Macbeth whirled, sword at the ready, a look of dread upon his face.

"Macduff! In the name of heaven, turn away! I've spilled too much blood of yours already to want to kill you too!"

Macduff moved closer, his warrior's eye searching out the weakness in Macbeth.

"Words have lost their meaning!" he cried. "My sword will speak for me!"

Springing forward, he aimed a blow straight at the head of Macbeth. Macbeth caught the blow on his own sharp blade and turned it away.

"Fool!" he cried. "You can't kill me. My life is charmed. No one can kill me!"

"Charmed or not, you bloody dog, I've come to pay you out!"

Macbeth backed away, crying, "Stop! I'll not fight with you!"

"Then yield, coward! Live to be scorned and laughed at!"

Macbeth gave way no further.

"All right," he said. "Have it your way. If blows and death alone will do, lay on!"

Madly, then, Macbeth rushed in, sword flying. He fought with courage but carelessly. Each time he was awkward in recovering or slow in defense, Macduff was there to gouge and wound.

At last, the fateful moment came. Macbeth lunged forward with his sword. Macduff stepped aside and with one mighty stroke put an end to the tyrant's life.

The Scots, seeing Macbeth go down, knew the day was lost, though they fought bravely on, selling their lives dearly in defense of Scottish soil.

So ended the battle of Dunsinane.

When the last Scottish standard was brought down, Siward put his axe away.

"See to the wounded," said he.

"And to the dead as well," added Malcolm, coming up. "How it tears the heart to see brave friends die!"

Siward nodded and said nothing.

An officer rode up and dismounted.

"Sire," said he to Malcolm. "Macbeth is dead. Macduff himself has done it."

"'Tis well," said Malcolm. "Now Scotland can be free again."

"And my son?" asked Siward eagerly. "What news of him? Does he thirst for battles still as when the day was young?"

Turning to face Siward, the officer removed his helmet and held it is his hand.

"Osborn thirsts no more, my lord."

The color drained from Siward's face. His voice seemed to come from far away.

"What then? Is he dead?"

"Yes, my lord, though I'd rather die than say it. He was scarcely more than a boy. Yet he fought like a man and, like a man, paid a soldier's price."

"One thing more I'll ask of you," he said. "Were all his wounds in front?"

"Yes, my lord. In front."

"Then peace to him and us," said Siward. "He lived with courage. God and country ask no more of any man."

Searching then among the dead, Siward came to the place where Osborn lay. He rested face down, the sword still gripped in his outstretched hand.

Removing the battered helmet, Siward gently lifted him up. Long, golden locks spilled across his forearm and hung down. Slowly, in a chill and silent wind, he bore him to the wildwood edge and buried him.

Farewell

Six weeks later, with Malcolm safely on the throne, Siward took his army home. Englishmen hailed him everywhere, calling out their tribute and their praise. The good people of York jammed the streets and would hardly let him pass.

A festival blossomed on the castle grounds. Knights fresh from the fields of Dunsinane tried their fortunes in the games. King Edward himself arrived to trumpets and the flash of armor.

"We sat at games together once before, my friend," said the king. "You won a bit of England then. Today you've won her heart."

On behalf of the people of England, he then presented Siward with a gleaming battle-axe overlaid with gold and the ancient Ravenlandeye banner which means, "Raven, terror of the land."

For days the great and common people of England flocked to York in a steady stream, eager to see the giant Northumbrian they'd heard so much about.

Siward didn't disappoint them. He received them in the main ballroom, towering gnarled and muscled like a weather-twisted oak. They gawked at him, bugging out their eyes in amazement and respect.

"So that's the Earl of Northumberland!" said one. "No wonder the Vikings ran!"

"They say he fights like a demon," said the other.

"So I've heard," replied the first. "Let all our enemies beware. Here, indeed, is an Englishman!"

Siward was filled with pride and gratitude. Yet, proud and grateful as he was, his spirit could not rise. For even in his thoughts loomed that cold earth mound at the wildwood edge in Dunsinane. It burned in him until he forgot to eat. He couldn't sleep. Night after night, he prowled the castle halls,

his lone taper etching ghostlike shadows on the stone.

Near the end of September, with autumn waving from the hills, he fell ill. For nine days he rolled and pitched with fever, calling out for Osborn and cursing Dunsinane. On the tenth day he awoke from a troubled sleep and climbed wearily out of bed.

"My lord!" one of the housecarls cried. "Take care!"

"Am I to die lying down like a cow? I who forged the back of England on a thousand bloody fields!"

"Must you speak of death, my lord?" the housecarl asked.

"Indeed!" cried Siward. "I have seen that dread knight far too often not to know him when he calls. Go then! Bring my armor and my shield. Lay the broadaxe in my hand. Time is running down."

His armor was brought and put on him. Going to the window, he looked upon York and the Northumbrian countryside.

"England!" he cried. "Remember me! For I have loved you well."

Saying this, he turned, moved a feeble half-step forward and slumped to the floor, his last breath expiring in the rattle of armor.

Four days later, to tolling bells, proud Northumbria buried him beside his church at York.